the way is without flaw

TEACHINGS OF

JOHN GARRIE RŌSHI

Dedication

In the best tradition of the old Zen masters, John Garrie Rōshi teaches an uncompromising and sometimes iconoclastic, yet always compassionate way to freedom and ease, using breath, relaxation and posture to bring us to the immediacy of the moment.

To those ‘lucky’ enough to find him he gives lovingly and unsparingly his knowledge of this at once simple yet profound teaching.

This book is a small but grateful thank-you to the Teacher and the teaching.

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JOHN GARRIE RŌSHI

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The Way is without flaw
It is completely helpful

For those who seek the way out
There is the way in

And for those who follow the way in
There is the way out

What more could we ever need?

J.G. Rōshi 1974

Contents

	Introduction	9
1	**Dynamic Stillness**	11
2	**Mindfulness**	15
3	**On Change**	17
4	**The Present Moment & The Sublime Abodes**	20
5	**On the Realities**	24
6	**Loving Kindness Meditations**	26
7	**Singularity, Duality and Confusion**	28
8	**Grass Roots**	33
9	**Elements**	37
10	**Old Beings**	41
11	**After the Workshop . . .**	45
12	**Dukkha (Suffering) – and Freedom**	52
13	**Some Definitions: Behaviour, Morality and Discipline**	55
14	**On Guilt**	58
15	**Shikan Taza & Some Questions on Meditation**	60
16	**What is Hand?**	65
17	**Male and Female**	67
18	**Communication**	75
19	**Communion and Transmission**	77
20	**The Games People Play**	79

21	**AIDS: A Planetary View**	82
22	**What Time Is It?**	85
23	**The Light of Mindfulness**	87
24	**Body Zones, The Face on the Body & Backward and Forward Circles**	89
25	**Healing – Attitudes and Methods**	94
26	**Where You Are Coming From & The Unimpressed**	103
27	**Tendencies and Characteristics**	105
28	**Reactions and Responsibilities**	108
29	**Humour**	111
30	**Inner Treasure**	120
31	**Thinking Sideways**	122
32	**Minding Your Own Business**	125
33	**The Ancient City**	130
	(*Peace To All Beings* meditation)	131
	The Way of Satipatthāna	133
	The Ancient Blessing on Wayfarers	135
	Biographical Note	136

Introduction

Allowing that we are all, if not schizoid, at least multi-faceted, I find that being asked to contribute some written words about a bookful of transcripts of my spoken words – some over twenty years old, others comparatively recent – presents the time honoured question ‘Who is doing what, with which, and to whom?’

That one does not, unless immensely self satisfied, remember word for word ones impromptu talks to students in varied groups – in the same way one might perhaps remember some published essay – is easily understandable.

All I can say is that when reading this book I became regularly forgetful that it was ‘mine’, and I often found myself saying, ‘Hey, this is great!’ and then retreating from that view almost in embarrassment at my approval.

You see in a way, it is not my book. Certainly I must take a responsibility for it – I can do naught else, for the tapes are all there to confront me. Perhaps now I would say some things differently – who wouldn’t? – but I do uphold what is said.

What surprises and delights me is the process that has produced it, now finished.

It has been a work of immense patience and devoted application, to put my work into the published form. Just to listen over and over again to the ‘same’ voice for what has been a five year period, painstakingly making notes, cutting repetition and then editing and re-editing is a most meticulous and loving project, and I cannot truly find words to express my admiration. Probably it is just this kind of application that has kept me away from writing a book myself.

So bear with me for I can with hand on heart recommend these words – they are good and present what I have taught for nearly twenty-five years. Yet I have to say ‘It is not my book, it is Sal Bowman’s’ – my words but not my book. Sal takes the credit for all the sweat, the determination and the buzzing in the ears, and I’m sure the headaches – not me.

Much praise also to Jerri Daboo – another student who has faithfully typed it all up from tapes and from Sal’s notes – another very special piece of work.

A word of warning. Don’t read it all at once. It is very dense – there is much in it for a fairly small book. Give yourself time to digest each chapter – my advice is not to read more than one a day – two short ones at most. It is not just dense, it is Zense.

Please join with me in my thanks to Sal Bowman and anyone else concerned in its final publication.

Enjoy. Be well and happy.

Rōshi John

Chapter 1

Dynamic Stillness

What I am teaching pivots on the practice of meditation in everyday life.

That practice is not merely sitting practice. It is to have at the centre of the being a core which is gentle, loving, positive, and above all, understanding. Without understanding, compassion and tolerance for the parts of the being – physical and mental – which are not still, there can be no meditation there can be no wisdom and there can be no love.

Within stillness, which is sometimes approached through silence, sometimes through movement, and always through breathing, there is the way to freedom.

Within this stillness, which we must cultivate, is the meeting of love and wisdom and of faith and understanding. There is the relinquishing of the things we hold on to and the things we push away and the confusions and indecisions which sap and fritter away our energies. With stillness energy becomes dynamic and perceptions are acute because they are not blurred and perverted by the acquisitive and the averse. The nature of this stillness as it expresses itself in the world is seen in kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and ultimately in the tranquillity of opinions and ideas and of the chemistry of the organism.

Our meditation is ‘Peace to all beings’, and that peace must start at home.

It is of no value to saturate the world with ideas of loving-kindness, tranquillity, compassion and sympathetic joy, unless you have first applied and directed those qualities to yourself. The principle is that until the cup is full it cannot overflow. If we fill *this*

vessel with the appropriate energy for the moment, with stillness, compassion and love, *then* it will overflow and whatever we touch in the world will be right, and we will be blessed by that overflowing.

Pay attention, with love, skill and understanding, to the only being over whom you have any possibility of exerting influence. You have neither the ability, nor the right to attempt any improvement or manipulation on any other. Your only duty is to bring this organism to stillness for itself alone. The fact that you then may be a light in the world should not impress you, but if you see it has value then it may give you joy. The purpose of your practice is to fill the cup and to live with skill in as rich, flowing and easy a way as possible.

Let go all the words and all the descriptions, and what remains is your quality in any moment. Let go of all the ideas and concepts which have built up this ego-preference, and what is left in the next moment is who you truly are. This is the practice. The practice of intelligent living, the practice of gently breathing and yearning for and loving the nature of stillness, and the dynamic activity which is neither aggressive nor acquisitive.

Whatever you are in your world you have practised – good, bad, liked, disliked – nothing in the world comes without practising. If you have fear you have practised it; if you have anger, you have practised it; if you have potatoes, you have planted potatoes; if you have flowers, you have planted flowers – and you won't get flowers by continuing to plant potatoes – it's as simple as that.

Ask yourself what you can let go of today. What do you no longer need to do that you always do? What new way, what new freedom, what new gentleness, can you bring to some action that you have over or under-energized in the past, to be more appropriate in the world? Do you really need to hold this attitude, adopt this posture or have this facial expression for a feeling of security or to impress

people? And if you do, what you are trying to prove? What do you not believe in?

It’s not strong people who thump weaker people; it’s the weaker who thump other weak people, because they’re afraid they’re not strong! If you are convinced of your own strength, maturity and clarity, then you don’t need to demonstrate it, for it will be self-evident.

What is the chemistry of kindness? What quality and sensations does it have and how much of the cup is filled with vibrations you call kindness?

What is the chemistry of stillness – when the chatter stops and there is no movement around some very gentle centre? What are these feelings? What is the chemistry of gentleness?

What is the chemistry of sympathetic joy, of being delighted for someone else’s pleasure, without any feeling of envy, and without trying to get in on the act yourself?

What is the chemistry of compassion which understands the beings that still suffer within oneself or in other people without being superior? It is no use saying to a memory of a rejected child: ‘Why are you behaving like a child?’ If that child has not been let go of, and is suffering, you must be prepared to be its counsellor.

You must accept the responsibility and joy of helping all suffering beings as they knock on your door in every moment, to bring them up to date and to freedom. If you just push them away your cup will never be full, and you will criticize other people for their non-practice, because it reflects and exposes your own.

For every being in the world with whose energy you are not compatible, there is some being within yourself whose energy you have not liberated, with compassion, love and understanding. For every being in the world who is not able to practise the particular thing you would like them to practise in order to make your world

more comfortable, there is some part of you that has not practised that itself – otherwise there would be no problem.

Your practice is not to influence the world. Accept the world wherein are contained all things, all joys and iniquities, all heavens and hells. Within this ‘fathom-long carcass’ are the laboratory, the adventure playground, the battlefield, the hospital, and the garden of pleasure – it’s all there – you don’t have to go outside, that’s just projection. Within ‘here’ are all the beings, all the levels, all the worlds, all the realities and all the unrealities that you could ever think of as being ‘out there’.

Practise on the single cells within this being, and when you have liberated all your old beings then you may come to freedom. Empty the cells of their prisoners – *you are not a prisoner, you are the jailer!* Listen to the small voice of the inner teacher who says to this ego: ‘Set my people free! Let them go.’

This is the practice. It starts with one out-breath – and within the holdings, the tensions, and the reluctances to let one breath go are proclaimed all the sufferings in the world. If you are able to understand why you cannot let one breath go completely and allow the next one to rise completely free – in that moment you have achieved the practice. If you are able to penetrate and perceive the nature of one cell, then you have perceived the nature of the whole of human nature, as it rises, suffers, and falls away, in each succeeding moment, throughout timeless eternities.

If with each successive breath that you let go, you put down everything that has gone before (literally in the ego sense, allow everything that has gone before to die without holding on in any way), then the next moment is born with a purity and a freshness which radiates through the body and permits you to be free in that moment. If, on the other hand, you hold onto ideas of personality, entity, status and ego, they will be represented by layers around the central area

which do not permit the full letting go in that moment. In other words you hold some essential factor of identity and breathe in at that level, and the new moment starts there – just a continuation of the old pattern. Then the central area which is clear and pure never expresses itself, and the organism never comes to freedom. In the physiological sense equally as much as in the psychological sense, the letting go must be complete. This is the ‘dying in the belly’, as the Japanese so beautifully express it.

Following that expiration comes inspiration, so that freshness and purity and loving-kindness can expand through the whole organism and radiate out into the world, and the light ‘may shine before men’. In each moment be inspired, and at the end of each moment expire and let go, so that each rising and falling fragmentary moment is free and fully experienced and celebrated. Without that celebration of the moment you will only celebrate past moments in which ego, possessiveness and rejections arise and if messages of loving-kindness are sent out from that basis, they will be judgemental and manipulative.

Chapter 2

Mindfulness

'Should any person practise these four Foundations of Mindfulness in this manner for seven days, one of two results may be expected in him: Highest Knowledge here and now, or, if there yet be a remainder of clinging, the state of non-return. Because of this it was said: This is the sole way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destroying of pain and grief, for reaching the right path, for the realization of Nibbana, namely the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.'

Thus spoke the Blessed One. Glad in heart, the monks welcomed the words of the Blessed One.

(The Maha-Satipatthāna-Sutta).

The above translation is taken from Nyānaponika Thera's book *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, a full description of the Buddha's 'Way of Mindfulness' – Satipatthāna – which should be in every collection.

This mindfulness, such a cumbersome word in English, indeed represents the heart of the doctrine. All approaches to the Dhamma, whether mundane, intellectual, or the most skilled meditational technique, begin and end in mindfulness.

Anattā, or impersonality – no 'selfness' – is the keynote in the structure of Buddhist thought. Without realization of Anattā, there is no Enlightenment and without intelligent understanding of its theory, there can be no glimpse of the implications of Buddhist philosophy.

The Way of Mindfulness is the 'sole way' to the realization of Anattā. The word in Pali is 'Sati', usually carrying the meaning of awareness or skilful attentiveness. In Sanskrit the word is 'Smrti', which carries the meaning of memory, in the sense of the recollection

of past events. All that is implied in both these meanings comes together in the act of Sati-patthāna. Sati – the skilful, mindful awareness of all conditions contributing to present phenomena arising – Patthāna – setting up or putting into operation this awareness. Recollection of the past observation of the present with pin-point concentration based in calmness, are therefore required in the practice of Mindfulness.

The development of Mindfulness depends on the realization that mindfulness is vitally needed, that mindfulness is not present to the extent needed, and that the state of mindfulness can be cultivated.

Of these three factors, the first is the most important. This is the *need* – the awareness that something is lacking in one's characteristics. It is the increasingly disturbing realization that long-accepted views do not nowadays seem quite so indestructible. It is felt in the more frequent moments of completely honest self-criticism and the frightening absence of self-justification which, in the past, has been so very near-to-hand. The ground under one's feet is no longer quite so solid and material possessions lose much of their warm promise of security in years to come. Personal effects suddenly become obviously associated with previous personal causes. Sowing and reaping is known as a *fact of life*, and is no longer just a matter of seeds and flowers.

We must also clarify the meaning of meditation. It is a much misused and misunderstood word, particularly when linked with the technique of Satipatthāna.

It is fashionable in the west to speak of 'practice', by which is usually meant taking a certain period of time each day to follow a set pattern of thought for the purpose of producing calm. It is often then considered reasonable to ignore all precepts of wholesome philosophical beliefs in the living of everyday life, and the idea that

the vigilant meditative state can be maintained throughout the twenty-four hours of our day, is regarded as being impractical.

As a demonstration of suffering and ignorance this has no equal.

Meditation is in operation at all times and concentration makes it effective. If concentration is weak then meditation is also weak. If the mind has been taught skill, then mindfulness will be in operation at all times during the day and night, whether waking or sleeping.

The contemplative state in which events are reviewed or examined at a set time, also needs the penetrating power of mindfulness to make it effective. Otherwise it will merely be daydream.

It is therefore not possible to separate meditation from mindfulness.

Chapter 3

On Change

There is only one thing in the universe that is unchanging – that you can rely on never to let you down – constant flux and constant change.

Trust it, it is your salvation. It is the mechanism of revelation – the vital tool to freedom – the answer to all internal problems.

Question: 'Why am I continuing to react to this situation in the way I always have before?'

Answer: 'I have not changed.' 'I have not seen things change.' 'I am ignorant, I don't realize the nature of change.'

Take as a maxim – 'Nothing is like Anything'.

One of the ways of not recognizing change is to say that what has just arisen or been said is like something else that arises or is said. If 'this' is like 'that' then I can hold on to an old opinion, an old identity, and I haven't changed.

Nothing is like anything – ever.

A monk who had great difficulty in learning the chants and rules came to the Buddha one day is great distress. He said: 'I can't remember things and therefore cannot live the life of a monk. I must leave the Order.' And the Buddha said: 'Well, the practice is the most important thing. The words direct you to the practice, but there are other ways.' He picked up a piece of white cloth and gave it to the monk. 'Take this and as you go into the forest and do your morning rounds for food, just keep rubbing the cloth between your hands.' A few days later when the monk looked at the cloth he saw it was soiled with minute flakes of skin, mucus, flesh and hair that had transferred from his hands to the cloth. Within that experience he understood the nature of change in all aspects of the universe.

That change is continual within this being that observes the world, and in the world that it observes.

That there is continual change at the finest and subtlest level. Each moment we are receiving new input from the universe. In response, chemical reactions occur in the body and there is change.

It is not the same, so don't hold on to it.

It is said you cannot step into the same stream twice. Nor can the same person step twice into the stream.

If we are practising something that promotes change then we must not be surprised, critical or bad-tempered if change takes place. If we are not the same, we will not have the same objects, events and people to cling to and get identity from.

When change occurs within the being and the natural flow is liberated, released and fulfilled in each moment, healing takes place spontaneously. There are manifestations at all levels of consciousness. The principal systems and functions of the body block, flow, throw out and re-arrange themselves. Ideas also change and new views occur which present people with a different world and a different being in that world to get used to.

The only thing to do is just watch it going on and not halt the process of transition by asking questions. 'What's happening? Where am I? What does it mean? What have I achieved? Why am I different today from yesterday? Am I back to square one? Is this enlightenment or madness?' None of these things is very helpful

Don't try and deal with it other than through the practice, because the practice is the only thing that is capable of dealing with it. Change is both blissful and terrifying.

As we have said many times, the diamond is in the dustbin. The diamond is surrounded by all the rubbish of the ages but is still nevertheless a diamond and shining brightly.

Always identify yourself with that diamond no matter how much rubbish is around it. Don’t for a moment permit yourself to become the rubbish.

Rubbish cannot deal with rubbish – only diamonds can deal with rubbish.

The troubled mind cannot deal with the troubled mind.

The irrational mind cannot deal with the irrational mind.

The mad mind cannot deal with the mad mind.

Only through the practice of the moment and the awareness of change is stability reached.

Chapter 4

The Present Moment & The Sublime Abodes

During the course of these last few days I have been speaking of, and directing activities towards, an understanding of the core of this ancient practice of Satipatthāna.

It is a two-fold training. First there is a cultivation of body and mind through the observation of their activities, and then a shaping and teaching of both body and mind to clearer and more wholesome ways of action leading to their freedom from habits and conditionings.

All the ills, congestion and wastage of body and mind happen only when the focus of attention leaves the present moment and the present action.

Anything which has a goal leaves the present moment.

Anything which has a goal has a minute extra layer of energy in every cell striving to move from the present moment into the goal ahead. It is a form of clinging or craving or looking forward to: even looking forward with apprehension puts an extra tingle, an extra pressure on each muscle fibre which produces an overall tightening and thickening of the muscle content, so that it is not just resting or balancing.

Just say to yourself: ‘I must get this right’, and watch what happens in the body. Applied to the area above and below the knee, there is a thickening and stretching and over a period of time there is pain in the knee.

The remedy is to change our style, our motivations and our way of being so that it will be a matter of curiosity or occasional revelation why over thousands of years, and thousands of so-called lives, the

habit has developed within human nature to leave the present moment.

Where else should attention be? That's where all the information is, where all the clarity, calm and peace is. Yet regularly we leave it for the stimuli of self-anxiety, self-concern, pursuit of identity in pasts and futures and the need for the survival of this thing we call 'me'.

We have to realize that we are born into an inexplicable and illogical way of being, and we have to get out of it as quickly as possible and do something that is more reasonable and more efficient.

If we wake up one morning with surprise and heat and find our bed-clothes on fire, the first thing to do is get a bucket of water and put the fire out, not start a conversation about who started the fire and why it should happen to us!

Deal with the facts as they are presented – and Satipatthāna, the way of mindfulness, does exactly that. Don't juggle around with concepts, get where the action is!

Earlier in the week I said we could describe this activity we call mind, as where the action is.

Where the action is there is mind.

Where the attentiveness is there is mind.

Where the focus of attention is, whether on physical or mental activity,s there is mind.

Consciousness exists in a physical base where attention is.

In the way of Zen, within the cultivation and culture of mind there is a going directly, through bare attention and insight, to experience, see and understand things as they truly are. There is no dependency on scriptures but a direct transmission and understanding of the realities. It is what is sometimes called the 'dry' way because it does

not depend upon devices or require any support other than one's own experience and activity.

It is possible within that to become self-centred and to forget the other factor that must always be brought to bear – the culture of what is called heart. Heart in the sense of the 'Sublime Abodes', the 'Brahma-Vihāras'.

These are simply the attention to and dwelling in loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and tranquillity and are what give warmth and moral strength to the dry, direct practice of insight.

In seeing things as they truly are one sees that although one has to strive *only* to liberate oneself, there are others similarly striving, and the sufferings of each individual person, although brought upon themselves, nevertheless produce a feeling of fellowship. So the practice of attentiveness and clear comprehension must be warmed and inspired by the ethical conduct and morality of these Brahma-Vihāras.

Loving-kindness is initially applied to *this* being so that the cup is filled and then overflows to any other organism or group of elements in the world.

Compassion and fellow feeling give an understanding that is not emotionally or sentimentally drawing identity or gaining status from another person's pain or indeed pleasure.

The twin aspects of compassion on the one side and sympathetic joy on the other are where the foundation of loving-kindness is directed – through the loving-kindness one has for this being with all its host of sufferings, one understands the nature of someone else's pain. There is an empathy that is not critical but notes the tendency in human nature to experience pain because of ignorance, cravings, needs and the absence of stillness.

In the same way, if someone has pleasure, delight or happiness, one feels some empathy and fellow-feeling without trying to draw

from it. One knows that the happiness is passing and understands the tendency in ourselves and others to grab at things and to hold on to them. Then one lets that subside through the practice of bare attention and meditation and through the knowledge of change and the realities.

When loving-kindness passes into compassion and sympathetic joy for this being and for other beings, tranquillity arises, and it is that tranquillity which is the basis for further insight and spiritual development.

So we put our attention on our meditation practice, and whatever observations we make, in terms of ourselves or other people, have to be viewed with that gentling of opinions, ideas and concepts, which permit us to have a loving feeling towards those who experience similar kinds of sufferings. Then we don't become averse to someone who is demonstrating the very problems and characteristics that we demonstrate, nor become envious of someone else's state of being we feel we would like to attain for ourselves.

All these things subside through the practice of bare attention and clear comprehension in its four aspects and from the very centre of the being there is the animation of those things of the heart, which are the moralities, the sensitivities, but are not the self.

The most vital aspect of these Brahma-Vihāras is that they are impersonal and one is not trying to gain status from them.

Negatively, when personalized, loving-kindness becomes self-love and self-indulgence, compassion becomes a great weight of sentimentality, sympathetic joy tends to envy and jealousy, and tranquillity hasn't even arisen.

There's a phrase in the Christian teaching that is usually misquoted and misunderstood: 'There but for the grace of God go I'.

I believe it should be: 'There with the grace of God I also go'.

Then there is compassion and the understanding that whatever happens in human nature, this being is also part of it.

Chapter 5

On the Realities

In this physically-based human existence there are three facts of life: Impermanence, Suffering and Impersonality.

Impermanence is the continual change and movement of every aspect of matter.

Due to ignorance and avoidance of this Impermanence and the clinging to the idea of an unchanging ‘me’, Suffering arises.

What reveals Suffering as being delusory in the personal sense, is that in something continually in change, there can be no permanent abiding self, entity or substance.

There is then a pattern of behaviour that seeks sensation in order to reinforce the idea of personality.

Personality is involved with time and space, beginnings and endings – the whole of realm of duality. The impersonal is clear and in the moment.

With the characteristic of taking things personally there is the owning of things that corrupts and avoids the moment and makes it impure. The impersonal is the pure naming of what is present, without the additives of ownership.

The personal has a vested interest and moves into dependencies on objects, events and people for its identity. This is continually denied and revealed as being false by the impersonality of the here and now, which says that all the trappings of the personality, all the descriptions, the analyses, the additives, are illusions in support of that basic delusion.

In esoteric terms, there is the clear upright line of here and now which is the impersonal, and that which crosses it, which is the personal in terms of time and space, the realm of sensation, beings,

ownership. So there is the perennial crucifixion at the point where the upright and the lateral cross.

Suffering is the being, extended on the cross, with the dilemma and the agony of belief in personality and also the clarity of impersonality that threatens its existence.

There is a continual urge from that impersonal central factor to express itself and there is the dulling of that understanding by the personality and the layers of ideas, opinions and beliefs that surround it.

On one side we have the dependencies and cravings, arising from personality belief and sceptical doubt about anything that challenges that being, and on the other side we have the impersonality practice of Satipatthāna which exists in the realm of meditation, relaxation and coming to ease in the moment – the naming of the pure experience without additives.

Chapter 6

Loving Kindness Meditations

The ‘Mettā’ or Loving Kindness meditation was particularly recommended by the Buddha for monks who were practising the burial-ground meditations. In the process of waiting for their new winter overcoat (squares of fabric cut from the fading shrouds of corpses went to make up the first saffron robes of the Buddhist monks), they would sit watching the ten stages of decomposition of the body.

Naturally, in the burial-grounds there were spiders and snakes who liked to nip in and out of the eye sockets and some of them where poisonous.

Similarly the monk living in the forest practised the Loving Kindness meditation, so that his chemistry would be of such an order as not to irritate any beast, insect or reptile.

One method is just repeating ‘May all beings be well and happy’ perhaps ten times, and then, ‘May this being be well and happy’ ten times, and so on. This has an effect on the chemistry of the body, and produces well-being and health. It can be a very useful base for everyday practice.

Another method involves visualizing four people: the first, someone for whom one has admiration and affection, but not a possessive or jealous love. Secondly, someone from whom one feels aversion or rejection, or someone who has a feeling of aversion or rejection to you. Thirdly, someone in the crowd, unknown, perhaps just a shape, for whom you have no feeling at all. And lastly, yourself. Then sit and try to give all four equally-loving thoughts, for their well-being and happiness, as if you are a small fire warming each of them.

Naturally you will find difficulties. Difficulty in selection, from which, if you are aware and honest, you will get a great deal of information. Difficulty in judgmental thoughts arising and even difficulties in negotiating the placings.

This is an exceptionally fine meditation for anyone who is troubled with restlessness, anger, aversion or any relationship problem.

Most of all it’s helpful in building up loving-kindness in this being at every level – physiologically, psychologically, psychically and spiritually.

Chapter 7

Singularity, Duality and Confusion

We live in a dualistic world where all standards of truth and reality are based on ideas, and words to describe those ideas, which depend on opposites. Since we are born into this kind of society we should not be surprised if we find ourselves continually faced with contradictions and paradoxes, because that is the nature of things.

I am continually asked questions which, by their nature, demand an answer that is absolute and singular, in words which are, by their nature, comparative.

The Buddhist philosophical system defines two kinds of truth: sammuti-sacca, the convenient way, meaning it is comparative, dualistic and a convenient mode of expression; and paramattha-sacca, the absolute truth, which cannot be spoken but only indicated. The nearest you can get to absolute truth, through convenient truth, is to say as clearly as possible what something is not, thereby indicating perhaps what it is.

In the face of this, human nature, bouncing as it does between the averse and the acquisitive, comes up with a solution, often filled with complaint and self-pity, called confusion. Our way of life is one which produces confusion and we cannot expect anything else if we want absolute, singular truth.

That is why teachers can only point the way, or say what is not, or demonstrate, or transmit. They can encourage the acceptance of confusion in their students so that through that confusion there can be a letting go of the demand for a dualistic, intellectual answer in words. I am very sympathetic towards this because I spent seventeen years battling with the need to know: ‘Is it this?’ ‘Is it that?’ ‘If it is not that, it must be this’ and receiving ‘Oh no, not so’. This is confusion.

Every teacher from time to time says: ‘this’, and they also say: ‘that’, but what is being answered is not the question but the questioner, and each questioner requires a different answer! If you are looking for consistency, don’t expect it, because what we’re trying to demonstrate is delusion.

The Buddha said: ‘It is not that and it is not this – there is a Middle Way.’ This Way is not a way of compromise – it is a totally and absolutely clear and fine, but immensely broad, Middle Way which you can only find by letting go of the idea that it has to be that or this.

When you let go of pasts and futures, in which we are all so deeply involved, and in which our identities are so bound up, you suddenly find a free, clear, beautiful thing called *Now*, which is totally singular and is the only place from which to understand pasts and futures.

The practice is quite simple; just *Here and Now*. There is nothing more to say, and if one follows the practice of just saying ‘here’ on the in-breath and ‘now’ on the out-breath, that is enough. But Rōshi is a realist and he knows people need more than that. They need options – like the man clinging on to a narrow ledge at the side of a cliff. He shouts: ‘Oh God, help me,’ and a voice from above says: ‘Have faith, jump, and you will land safely and all will be well’. He looks down about two hundred feet to the rocks below – looks back up and says: ‘Is there anyone else up there I can talk to?’ One has to be a realist, one has to find many different ways of saying one simple truth, on as many occasions as possible.

The thing which contains everything that everyone seeks – the answer to all questions – the dissolving of all questions and questioners – knowledge of the infinite past and the infinite future – the ultimate magic – the ultimate mystical experience and the ultimate peace passes us by in every second and is ignored. The great secret is ignored in every moment, and that secret is Here and Now.

All knowledge, all wisdom, all love and all peace is right here and now in this moment. And every single one of those beautiful secret moments passes as we bounce from something in the past to something in the future.

The secret – well you've waited for centuries, you can wait a few more moments – the secret believe it or not – is to breathe out. To let go of the breath, to let go of the weight of blood in the fibres that restrict the breathing, to release the posture, the pelvis, the diaphragm and the shoulders from tension into ease; to permit all the things you regard as you, your possessions, your hates, your confusions and all the sensations by which you identify yourself and excite and depress yourself, to release and let go. In that moment to let the identity that resides in those tensions die in the belly so that, in the next moment on the next in-breath, that which is to be reborn may be reborn free from all conditionings of the past and all aspirations of the future. No matter what it is – a great suffering, a great anger or hate, a fruitless search, or a deep pain, when those things are let go, you become free from them. On the out-breath there is a release of tension from the muscle fibres, a letting go, a putting down of the use of that particular thing to identify oneself with and to gain recognition from.

How long will you take to come to that skill? It can be two months or twenty years – but that is all that is needed to come to freedom – to have the answers you need for the dissolution of questions and for the letting go of the pain and discomfort of things that are not satisfactory in the world.

Sometimes I say: 'Ask questions', and sometimes I say: 'Don't ask questions'. Both are equally and sublimely helpful and true, because I'm sublimely helpful and truthful – it is my duty. If it were possible for me to say two things at the same time, which clearly it is not, then you would have great cause for complaint, but anything I say

in this moment is totally different to something I may say in the next moment because the moment is different.

On the one hand we are told that it is only inhibiting the final goal to strive to gain something. We are even told that we mustn't have an idea of a final goal.

On the other hand we are told that the final goal is already achieved and all we have to do is realize it – which can then obviously become a goal.

We do need energy, effort, willpower and discipline to apply ourselves to the things we need to do in order to let go of all the things that are of no use to us. But it is a particular kind of striving, and the striving must not be a striving

One exerts energy for the moment, and not towards a goal.

Even in trying to describe this in words you can see the confusions and pitfalls and traps that lurk in every phrase and around every comma and full stop. Only because I am familiar with, and know the dark confusions very well, can I talk endlessly about it. I know that there is clarity at the heart of confusion.

I would ask you not to resent confusion, because it is your salvation. Confusion is the way through. You must be prepared to let go of the need to know *about* things and to have things said in words in terms of rights and wrongs; to accept contradictions and paradoxes as part of the game, and above all to embrace confusion and frustration. We all have primitive and medieval memories, and the nearer we get to truth and breakthrough, and that fine, bright point of light as our identity, the more will those origins rise. In legends there are always stories of the temptations and torments which rise at the point of liberation and freedom.

Whenever one dedicates oneself to this way of life and being, things rise to seduce or terrorize one from it. If that dedication and

commitment is powerful and sincere enough, the torments and the devils and the temptations will always arise to try to divert one from it.

I promise you that the nearer you get towards breaking through to peace and freedom and clarity, the heavier and the more confusing it will get. The more ready you are to embrace that confusion, to watch it, stand back from it, and to see all the old, traditional and historical fears and conditionings milling around, from a point of compassion and amusement and certainty of one's own 'identity', the easier it is.

Don't expect that it is going to get easier, only expect that your capacity for going more deeply into your own nature and into the nature of the world will increase, and in that there will be great peace.

You must also accept responsibility for the capacity to see greater depths of suffering and not to take it personally, because that becomes self-indulgent. It is very easy through meditation to see the nature of world suffering, and to grab at is and take it for oneself. That then prevents you from being clear and compassionate. You must watch those suffering beings which arise within you from the past, as the all-compassionate, all-wise, all-knowing teacher at the very centre of the being.

You can't put anything right, all you can do is be in the moment. You can't change anything of the past, it is there, it is done – don't play around with it, don't pick at the old injuries, you only open them up and make them bleed again.

The best way of hurting yourself is to fight against the paradoxes and contradictions that continually exist in the world.

Just one moment behind, one moment ahead, and you are in the realm of potential suffering.

The only safe, clear, absolutely true place is now, in the present moment, and from here you can view the whole universe with clarity.

Chapter 8

Grass Roots

I was thinking back the other day to where all this started. It was at the beginning of World War II, and I was just a lad. I had been through a year of what was called ‘preparation’ for confirmation in the Church of England and I was repeatedly promised ‘a revelation’ by the vicar. I was very earnest about my revelation. The confirmation day was very hot and a large, red-faced, sweating bishop put a large, sweating hand heavily on my head, and I stood up. Nothing was revealed. For nine weeks I sweated and prayed and thumped my breast and wondered what was wrong and eventually decided that either I was beyond any possible redemption, or that somewhere there had been a breach of contract – so I became a somewhat militant agnostic.

Round about that time I made my first appearance – my first step onto a stage to entertain. A very old veteran of the music hall told me that I had to ‘move from the belly’, otherwise I would slouch and people would take no notice. ‘You’ve got to sell yourself, lad’, he said.

Then I met a very old man – he appeared to me to be very old at that time – probably he was the same age as I am now. He was a schoolmaster, and I sat with him during the blitzes waiting for fire bombs to drop. The idea was that we put them out, but none ever fell on us. He was a Greek scholar and he introduced me to a phrase – ‘Man, know thyself’. That gave me hope and I followed the possibility that I could ‘know myself’ and that a blind leap of faith wasn’t the way.

A few years later in about 1940, whilst doing my first physical training instructor’s course I met a man called Regimental Sergeant Major Instructor Silvester who was the captain of the British Olympics

gymnastics team of 1936. He did a remarkable thing. He stood on a bar about three inches wide and about five feet from the floor. He had a huge barrel chest and he raised his arms above his head, bent from the waist, put his hands between his feet, raised his feet up, and stood perfectly on his hands without a waver. ‘All balance, lad, and breathing,’ he said. ‘You’ve got to do it with the breath.’

I suppose all those different things were the basic conditionings which developed a path that I’ve followed ever since and which, if I look back at them, have parallels now. All my training in theatre, in movement, relaxation, physical training, circus, my quest in various philosophies, my training with Buddhist monks – all following ‘Man, know thyself’. With the emphasis on the fact that the approach to the thing that we call ‘Myself’ – the thing that we identify ourselves by – can not be through the mind, but must be through the body.

Due to ego, our intellect, and these ‘minds’ we’re so proud of, we tend to get the idea that the route to the ‘spiritual’ life, the route to peace and understanding is through thinking: and that is not true. Some of the greatest confusions arise through the pursuit of things of the mind, and trying to work things out by thinking about them.

All the evidence that we have of the world comes to us through physical sensations. All our reactions, all the games we play, all the postures and the roles we adopt, all the mannerisms and all the gestures, all the changes of facial expression and colour, are all physically based and *they are what we are in the world*. They are the things over which we have the least control, because we have no skill – we are always taught to try to *think* our way through things. If you happen to get into a paper bag – which some of you do repeatedly, it’s really no good trying to think your way out of it.

The route to anything that we call ‘spiritual’ (and I don’t like the word – I’m not offering it as a goal) must essentially be something which happens within the organism, because everything that happens

within the world is a projection of what happens within this physical organism. At a very basic level if we look at the cellular structure of this thing we call ‘myself’, this body, we find that if it is approached by something external to itself, it will react in one of two ways. It will either open up and take in – accept, ingest and absorb that which is outside, or, if it is unfavourable, it will harden, vibrate, push away, reject or escape. No matter what the reactions of this multi-cellular organism we call ‘me’, we will find that they are one of those two things. We bounce continually between these things – sometimes several times during one paragraph, even one sentence. We react to sensory impressions, we react to thoughts, to memories, to ideas, and all the time those two things are going on. Either in a positive way – taking in and ingesting, or in a negative way – grabbing, possessing, preventing things that we think we possess from leaving. Or positively protecting ourselves – avoiding things which are not wholesome, analysing, probing, penetrating, or negatively – rejecting or attacking with anxiety, fear, anger and aggression. Negatively there is also the factor of confusion, of not knowing the true things in life, not seeing the realities; we foster these negative reactions by all the inherited views and ideas we have about our nature – the illusion and the delusion of separateness from the world. Every scrap of evidence we have shows that each organism in the world is of exactly the same constituents as every other organism, but we still maintain this idea of separateness, and from this arises the idea of possession and rejection.

Ideas of ‘This is me’, ‘This is mine’, ‘I am this’, ‘I don’t want it’, ‘I love it’, ‘I hate it’. Each of these reactions produces a change in the chemistry in the body, resulting in tensions of posture, gesture, breathing or attitude which we then describe as our ‘personality’. This is our shape in the world, our ‘geography’.

We have developed vast cultures and civilizations around these ideas. We have created vast religious and political systems, based on precisely these things. You can take the whole of international, national and local structures and categorize them – in terms of the acquisitive or the averse. That which holds, that which conserves, that which rejects change, and that which pushes and stirs and tries to produce revolution. It is not surprising to find that these particular patterns prevail in the body – in this organism that we call ‘me’ which is the centre of our universe. The aversion pattern, with the shoulders up, the head forward, stiff knees and the weight on the heels, fists clenched – or the broader, thicker thing that cannot let go – that holds everything in the chest and in the belly and walks flat-footed on the earth. Exactly the same – the acquisitive and the averse.

So as Sergeant Major Instructor Silvester said: ‘It’s a matter of balance’. When the weight is right, when the point of gravity is right, when the balance is right, then you can move freely through the world and do things that other people can’t.

I have something here I want to read – just a short thing, written by a Zen master, Okada, speaking of the tanden, which is the belly, the area below the navel: ‘If one divides people into ranks, the lowest is he who values his head. Those who endeavour only to amass as much knowledge as possible grow heads that become bigger, and so they topple over easily, like a pyramid standing upside down. They excel in imitating others, but neither originality, nor inventiveness nor any great work is theirs. Next come those of middle rank. For them the chest is most important. People with self-control, given to abstinence and asceticism belong to this type. These are the men with outward courage, but without real strength. Many of the so-called ‘great men’ are in this category, yet all this is not enough. Those who regard the belly as the most important part and so have built the stronghold where the divine can grow – these are people of the

highest rank. They have developed their minds as well as their bodies in the right way. Strength flows out from them and produces the spiritual condition of ease and equanimity. Those in the first category think that science can rule nature, those in the second have apparent strength and discipline and they know how to fight – those in third know what reality is.'

If we look at the body as a wheel, we will find that the point of friction at the rim is where the greatest agitation and irritation is – moving in to the point at the hub, which is centre and still. When that inner stillness in the physical organism is found, then all things are possible. High aspiration in spiritual terms and thinking terms, in the heart centre and in the head, produces acts of great devotion and great self-centredness, or acts of great aversion, violence and obscenity; both these have been the mark of all the great religions. Anything which is possessive and competitive, and which seeks to conquer and convert is demonstrating the immense self-centredness of both the acquisitive and the averse. Only that which is in contact with reality and lets things be, can be truly centred and that centeredness comes first from the physical organism being healthy and clear, flexible and balanced. Not doing things in a way which is spectacularly different, like walking on water, or floating a few feet above the earth, but doing the ordinary, mundane, everyday things in a brilliant way. In a way which flows easily through them, which isn't niggling at things, which isn't protecting its status or its ego. That which allows things to be. Where else would that express itself, but at centre, where all things in this organism begin?

So if we're talking of this thing that has come to be called Sati, we must look at it as a method of exercising this physical organism, letting it walk parallel to the ground, easily in contact with the earth and also reaching up and in contact with the heavens, so that a flow is established. If we are able to behave with the right energy for each

moment and deal with each moment as it arises, then all the pasts and futures in which our sufferings reside, will have no influence on us. The only way to this is through the exercise of physical stability and of clarity of thought.

If you want the spiritual life, look for it in the belly and not in the heart or the head. If you want calm, look for it at the centre of the wheel, not at the rim.

If you are centred, then that centredness will communicate itself through the rim and out into the world and people will see you differently because you are practising the freedom of the moment, and not the chains of some past times, or the possibilities of some future time.

That is what we try to practise.

That is what Sati is all about.

The centring, the balance, the breathing, the freedom; from all this comes a clearer viewpoint, a better understanding of our true nature, and a freer approach to reality. You won't do it by thinking or by reading and you won't do it by wanting – you will only do it by practising. You won't get anything by rejecting or striving. You will only get it by realizing who and what you are in any given moment, because that is all there is.

A series of moments.

If we string that series of moments together, like all the stills that make a moving picture, then we will be deluded about our nature and think we are the continuity of that picture.

In actual fact, we are only those separate moments, and each separate moment produces another moment. So if you're not happy with any given moment, start practising better moments and then things will change for you.

Chapter 9

Elements

The characteristic of the earth element is that it occupies space and provides a base from which things can root and grow. It has weight, volume and extension. The physical body, although water-based like all cellular structures, is Earth element in the way it occupies space and provides energy for growth.

People can be grounded and brought to practicalities by burying their feet in the earth outside or in a bucket of soil inside. The elements in our psychic nature can be roused in these simple, mundane ways.

We can also adjust them by awareness in meditation of how they operate in us – by regarding the area just below the navel as a bowl of earth, into which we plant a seed. Then the sun of the heart warms it, air from the intellect aerates it, water from the intuition feeds it, and the seed begins to grow. Out of that seed there comes a symbol of the awareness and essence at centre.

The characteristic of Fire is the presence or absence of temperature – anything from anxiety to anger, from affection to possessiveness. It is the friction and contact between two things, and its potential is concentration. There is a commitment both in actions and gestures, and the eyes come through into the face.

Fire and Earth provide the vertical axis in the body. If the concentration is resting exactly in the moment, and is based in practicality, then the Fire rests in the crucible of Earth and there is balance between the two elements.

In a fiery nature that isn’t earthed, the upper part of the body will push away, lifting the shoulders in anxiety or aggression and

producing tension in the pelvis, the arms, the throat and the anus, influencing gestures, facial expression, breathing and posture.

Many people fear fire energy: they have either experienced anger, anxiety or jealousy for themselves or through other people and have been hurt. This is often reinforced by attitudes of parents, teachers or society, but if the fire aspect is closed down the comfort, warmth, joy and healing, which are also part of fire, are lost.

How do you organize your resources? What is the attitude when you are cold? Do you go to external things like putting on a pullover, or do you bring up energies in your body with awareness of the way they can be used? You can change the rhythm of the breath, increase and distribute the right kind of oxygenation through the body, and the temperature rises. Pull the breath in from a deep level in the body and make sure the in-breath matches the out-breath. Extend your breath and your presence throughout the body, because wherever the presence is there tends to be heat. If there is too much heat in the body, visualize a palish blue breath and let it distribute itself through the lungs and the blood stream until the body becomes cool, or reaches its correct temperature.

The potential behind Water is that of fluidity and cohesion. It is able to move and change its shape with great ease, to flow through and round, over and under things. This probably makes it the most powerful of all elements, because it is undefeated by any other. It is also the element of consciousness because we are water-based beings. It has the correspondence of vitality and fertility, of faith, intuition and femininity and it is the yin or moon aspect.

Air is more complicated. It represents movement and vibration; levels of speech, and associative thinking. It is the intellectual and reasoning, the so-called ‘male’ or yang aspect, and its potential is knowledge and wisdom.

On the lateral axis of the body Air is right, and Water is left, wisdom and faith, intellect and intuition.

An absence or weakness in Water and an overemphasis on intellect will produce fear, cunning and manipulation. If the intuition and faith are weak, there is a lot of thinking and no trust. To bring up the balance one can contemplate some painting, haiku, koan or other object which speaks simply to one of truth. If it is also possible to sit by a stream and listen to the sound of running water then that is helpful. A few tears may arise, but it will bring up the faith. A lack of Air and an overemphasis on Water will lead to blind faith, producing superstition and fantasy.

When Water and Earth combine they produce mud – apathy; Fire and Air give us hot air – too much verbalization. The manic depressive has both these relationships.

Fire and Water form a steamy, gaseous, floaty psychic apathy, and Air and Earth produce dust – the fragmentation of the personality.

Sometimes one aspect is completely absent, such as Air: Fire, Water and Earth produce a physical depressive – without the Air, there isn't manipulation.

On the vertical axis good energy but bad concentration will produce physical restlessness and lack of direction. If there is concentration but no energy, then it is the mind that flits about, not able to centre on anything and lapsing into apathy and day-dream.

When the elements are out of balance, you have the insecurities, doubts, fears, acquisitiveness, aversion, low cunning and manipulations resulting from your needs, desires, disappointments and frustrations.

Both axes pass through centre, and may be controlled form there. Centre is Sati – space – mindfulness, attention, awareness, being in the moment. So when there is a fusing of these energies and their axes there is balance and harmony in space.

Chapter 10

Old Beings

The function of a mirror is to reflect and thus inform, not to impose an opinion on the reflection and thereby become manipulative. Similarly an old being or an old conditioning just provides information without embroidering or weighting it with opinions and emotional reactions belonging to the past. The duty of the being in the present moment is to use that information appropriately, and not for the old pattern to rise and take it over. Those conditionings are ghosts or shadows and we must not give them the status or power of true entities and into a relationship with them. They are out of date, immature beings often hiding behind devil masks.

Childhood habits, excuses and insecurities are deeply rooted and influence our adult actions in ways that are beyond our speed of perception. If proof is needed to support this statement, it will be found in many everyday instances of totally irrational emotional prejudices rooted in previous occurrences or socially imposed viewpoints.

Facts always arise first, but a strong emotional tension associated with those facts will often manifest with such force that it will literally smother any information that they could provide. Indeed, a deeply rooted complex of emotions will sometimes exert what can only be described as a ‘suction’ upon factual knowledge, and will thus prevent any form of identification taking place. The result can be hysteria, ‘black-out’, or some action which is performed without full consciousness being present. The most common effect of this process is that it denies the existence of any new facts relating to an object or event, often to the extent of manipulating or deceiving the senses – or so we would normally describe it. The senses do not *see* or *hear* or

taste of their own accord – it is *identification* that is deceived or manipulated.

I use the story of the young boy with a brand new pair of skates skating down his street of terraced houses and green garden gates. He passes a little white dog with black markings over one eye and ear sitting by an open gate, and as he does so his skate flicks up and hits the dog in the muzzle. The little boy skates on and the dog runs into the house yelping. About a year later in the same street, the same dog with black markings over one eye and ear, is sitting by his gate. Another little boy comes by on skates and the dog bites him. The little boy disappears home yelping. Five years later, that second boy is walking along a street of terraced houses with green gates in a totally different town. A little white pup with black markings over one eye and ear comes up to him. The boy lashes out and kicks the little dog and it runs away yelping.

Which boy did the dog bite, and which dog did the boy kick? In each case, the fact preceded the emotion associated with it, and in each case, the facts were blotted out by the force of the arising tension. The significance of this example, which symbolizes the whole mechanism of the identification/action process, is that an emotional reaction came to be in the present, dependent on conditioning in the past.

The variations on this example would fill a book and would be a chronicle of man's inhumanity to man – of racial and religious persecution, of sadism and perversion, of petty quarrels and teenage swagger, of greed, ill-will and bewilderment – of suffering. It is in this process of identification that ignorance and unknowingness weave their illusions. Here are to be found the many aspects of wrong views, of clinging to set opinions, of rule and ritual and of prejudice.

We hold by habit, tradition and the nature of our society to the idea that we are continually the same person thus preventing

ourselves from seeing that ‘this’ is not like ‘that’, and ‘that’ is not the same as ‘this’. Because we wish to be the same we link events together and miss the point of freedom between the two, permitting ourselves to be overtaken by the emotional conditionings of old information which may not be relevant in the present moment.

No event occurs without past conditionings and present circumstances. We have to take responsibility for the present circumstances and for the information from past conditionings, and put the two together.

We must also understand that the being we exercise now is an ‘old being’ of the future, and has a duty to that future being to perform any action in the most perfect way it can. That way there is progress – if we are continually repeating the past we regress.

As we let go of our superficial tendencies we get to deeper seated old beings and expose a crust layer of patterns of tension. As these are revealed they emerge raw and demanding. An exercise relaxes an area normally held tense around a major part of our negative personality and identity. Immediately there’s a kick-back because of the threat of redundancy and spanners are thrown in the works. This is why you have to keep doing the simple things – replacing old habits with new ones in an unchallenging sort of way, rather than building up a big confrontation.

After the volcano comes peace, but we must still expect the occasional eruption. It may be hot when the lava pours out but it’s very good growing ground eventually. You get a glimpse of what can happen, feel vulnerable, and there’s a counter-reaction: inspiration – resistance, inspiration – resistance. But at least you know what it is that’s resisting. Once you know what it is that’s resisting and you have a name for it, then you can never, ever, be the same again; never be quite so dedicated to your old beings or so totally taken over by

them as you were when you didn’t know how to name them and didn’t know what they were.

It’s very useful to get on intimate terms with our old conditionings and influences and know what kind of sensations they bring up in us. They may be pleasant sensations of expectation and delight or very unpleasant sensations of anger, self-pity, fear, jealousy or envy. We must consider compassionately that they may have been the only sensations that a previous young being had to hold on to, feelings of being misunderstood, of being wronged, of being loved or not being loved.

If they are remembered and sought after when nothing particularly is happening it is because they were powerful enough at that time to give identity when there wasn’t identity coming from anything else. It might have been the only thing that kept that being sane, within a situation of death or hopelessness without any possible sign of escape or relief. Because it was of value at that time there is sometimes a tendency to flip back, not for the comfort, but for the acute sense of identity it give in that moment.

We are creatures of sensation, and the more powerful the need for identity the more powerful the need to go for the stronger sensations. We must learn to let go and to exist on the quieter, more gentle, more qualitative sensations rather than for increasingly heavier and more powerful ones. Within that there is gratitude to whatever experience has brought us to this moment, and we can view the present situation with an equanimity and a clarity and wisdom that those previous beings were not able to have.

It is our duty, and our work within this context, to expand and free ourselves from these conditionings through the kind of practice we have at the present time. We mustn’t try to achieve perfection in a frantic and tense way because that which is, is already perfect and

needs no further perfection; no more must we try to *get rid* of the negative because we only energize what truly doesn't exist anyway.

Know that *In this moment I am free.*

We have to adopt an elevated view and look with compassion and understanding upon these old patterns and raise them up to that level. 'If I be lifted up I will draw all beings unto me.' At your peril descend to their level and negotiate with them.

It's the story of the parent upstairs and the child below in the garden seeing the bushes waving about and something moving. It shouts: 'There's a bogey man in the bushes, I can see it, I can see it,' and the parent looks out of the window and sees that it is the family dog playing in the bushes. The parent comes downstairs and takes on the view of the child, but with the knowledge that the child doesn't have that it's a dog playing in the bushes. The child is getting all the sensation it wants from shouting: 'There's a demon in the bushes,' and the parent is saying: 'No there isn't a demon in the bushes'. What the parent has to do is to take the child upstairs and show it the superior view. The child may sulk at having its fantasy shattered but it will nevertheless realize the truth of the matter. These are wilful children locked in a particular fantasy without the mature view, and they have to be lifted up. You must give these old beings just a little bit of room to play and then say: 'That's enough'. Some old beings are useful, they have skills which they gained for totally unwholesome reasons but which can be used when animated from the present standpoint.

We must learn how to live on the Middle Path, between the ghosts of the past and the omens of the future, where things are seen *as they really are* – now, in the present moment, distinct and separate and liberated from the fetters of emotional memory. To see thus with clarity, is to perceive the true nature of objects and events. To live in a state of mental repose which enables us to gain full value from the

facts of experience, but which remains unaffected by a previous reaction that can have no usefulness in a present situation.

Chapter 11

After the Workshop…

After the workshop, from the stillness I noticed that I was bored… I felt all the old tensions coming back, the restlessness. Is it all right not to have any hobbies or anything? I don't feel happy not having any, but at the same time I don't seem to find any.

Let's take the judgemental thing out of that. There's nothing 'right' or 'not right', or 'ought' or 'should' about it. It's probably helpful to get away from the thinking *about* things. I can't do better than this expression of getting 'into' something. It really means that – getting into it so there's no separation of 'me' and 'it'. No thinking about it or thinking about doing it. One is right there in it, with it. If one is centred, and donating energy that goes into the self into other beings, it's impossible to be bored, because there is contact.

When we say 'What am I doing?' we are needing some kind of external contact in order to get our own identity from it. When we go from the understanding of being alone, and translate that, in subjective terms, into being lonely, we will start looking for stimulus, for objects to relate to. Preferably those which give such a kick of possessiveness or rejectiveness that the sensations are strong enough to make us feel this sense of being, which we call 'me'. In ideal terms, which we obviously can't consider, when there is complete stillness there can be no boredom, because there is no being to be bored, in terms of pasts or futures. What we can have is skilfulness. Something you said seems to suggest that you're separating life from practice.

When I went home to my flat and tried to do the same as I did on the workshop, I found that I couldn't, because everything was too familiar.

All that happens is that there are familiar triggers of visions and sounds, to which you react. If you have the concept: 'I am going to do slow walking practice – here in London', then that will encourage separation. Ideally, we're trying to change the point of view, so that we are aware and centred in any activity, and that takes the sting out of the loneliness in those situations. If we find tidying the flat, cooking, working – whatever it is – boring as such, it either means that we're trying to take too much out of it without giving anything, or we're trying to reject it because it's something we can't give our whole heart to. If we can approach it in the same way as the exercises, by giving to it, then we suddenly find that we can find some new dimension in what before we found boring.

We tend to take, and this is what produces the dichotomy between us and the world – it's self-protective. A very important part is not having value judgements – the feeling of either success or failure, but just watching what happens. Don't judge it – just say 'Whoops', take a breath and start again fresh in the next moment. No law has been broken. If you judge everything against the standard of perfection then everything you do in your life will be failure.

I was wondering if I could console myself with the fact that I've got a fairly full-time hobby with Sati or whether there's something 'wrong' in quotes. . .

I won't take umbrage at that remark, I know exactly what you mean, but, ideally, Sati should be the life, and what you call living should be the hobby. That's where you get the fun out of it – the enthusiasm;

getting pleasure, excitement and a deep sense of adventure in watching life within oneself and within the world outside. I sometimes feel that if there is a missing ingredient in the practice for those I teach, it is in this factor of enthusiasm and of constant watchfulness, not as a chore or as a discipline, but because it the great adventure, the great quest. If the pursuit of insight, liberation and happiness is not the most exciting interest you have and you make a chore of it, then it's not going to work for you. When you get that into perspective, you will find it will enrich everything you do.

I find that there are two people in me at the moment, one a 'Sati person' and the other one that's operated for a very long time. I feel one beginning to overtake the other, but with some loss. The sort of people I was friendly with and liked very much can't come to terms with the change in me, because many of the things that we had in common don't matter as much to me now. I feel a bit of regret at losing their friendship, or their understanding, and I was wondering whether other people have found that as well. It's not so much a question, it's more a statement.

It's almost universal I would think. I certainly found it. You move into a new space but human nature being what it is, other people tend to stick to their spaces and don't move on.

We are influenced externally by old habit patterns and tensions, old graspings and rejections and the likes and dislikes we had in the past. Suddenly, there is an inner something developing, which says that these extremes of possessiveness and rejections which are the nature of suffering are no longer valid and necessary. So we find that we have moved on and other people have not and therefore we have no contact with them. It's symptomatic. The only part that complains is the old part that is beginning to feel the dissolution of those old

patterns and is holding on to them. It very often produces a lot of reaction. Some people take a year to get over it, because they look at it in terms of: ‘I am going to have to make a sacrifice if I want this’. There’s nothing to be sacrificed. There’s nothing to be gained. You only have to understand where you’re at.

I feel there’s a slight gap that I would like to be filled. If they move out, those people who mattered a lot – whom I call friends – there’s a space waiting. It would be all right if somebody could come in and take that space.

I understand that, and I think you’ll find that it does happen. The quantity lessens considerably, but the quality improves. This was one of the reasons behind the idea of a network of people who practise this way. I know how immensely lonely, in these terms, I was over a long period of time. The difficulty in finding someone who knew what I was talking about – in that sense I still find it difficult. But it is replaced by the friendships you know are there and take comfort from. You don’t have to be continually in contact with them, in some negotiation, in order to make them valid.

I find with old friends you’ve got to continually adopt the same attitude to something. You criticize the same people … it’s difficult to be able to say to those friends: ‘Well look perhaps we’ve been wrong all along,’ because they don’t want to be wrong.

It’s part of a habit reaction which gives us our identity, our personality, a role which says: ‘I hate such and such’. If I’m deprived of that, then I’m deprived of that relationship, because the dislike relationship is so strong in building up the ego entity. It builds up our

status and the role of: ‘I am right’, even more than the possessive relationship with someone ‘I like’.

Yes, that seems to be common at work, doesn’t it? In the tea break, criticize the boss. To take a step out of that faces you with problems. If you’re not joining in somebody looks over and asks: ‘What’s happened to you?’

It’s the nature of people to feel, not that you have gone to a middle point, but that you have changed sides. If you are not longer criticizing the person, then they will transfer the criticism to you. But you will find that people will sometimes respond and say: ‘I’ve been feeling the way you’ve changed. Something good happened to you. What is it?’ and then maybe you can help. You find yourself placed more and more in the role of the strong factor, the teacher, the helper, the Universal Auntie in these situations. If you’re not careful it can build into a dependency relationship, and there’s nowhere for you to let your hair down and be weak, because then you leave the role that they demand of you. That is very often the reason you have to move on, because you no longer have any point of contact.

There are lots of situations that crop up, like an invitation to go somewhere. You know that once you’re there, it’s going to be part of the old patterns of taking somebody apart, so then you have a decision. You can either say: ‘No thank you, I don’t what to come tonight’ with all that entails, or you can go along and feel annoyed with yourself for falling back into the role that you’ve now begun to dislike.

But why do you take on the role of someone who’s hurting someone?

It's just that if somebody has for many years invited you to have a coffee or go out for a drink and you begin to say no and don't give a plausible excuse, you've obviously preferred something else to their company.

I'm afraid you must permit them to react in the way that they have to, and in their reaction see a reinforcement of what you know from Sati. They are doing it to themselves. Provided you are not actively doing anything to hurt them, then they must be permitted to do as they wish. In that process, they may find something different in you that they want.

During the weekend you said that you can't notice everything because there's so much going on. How, when you're in a situation, and giving to it, can you also be aware of body patterns?

Only by practice. First don't have any standards of 'I have to be aware all the time' – that is only the potential. When we first see the gap between the time we are aware and the time we're not, it can appal and terrify us. All we can do, is try to improve it. As an old pattern rises there is a movement towards a forward circle, and the balance and the point of gravity in the body will change. In response to that, different kinds of thoughts, identities, attitudes and tendencies arise, and it is our job as meditators and practitioners or mindfulness to be watchful of those things, to know when they're happening and how to adjust and be in control of them rather than be manipulated by them. We can have an early warning system which gradually grows so that we see the rising of subtle tensions and let them go before they build up. Sometimes it comes in a swift lump and we suddenly find ourselves triggered into an old pattern with no idea how it started. There are two things we can do then: one is to make use of exercises to get ourselves back on an even keel; the other is to sit in a

contemplative sort of meditation and try to feel our way back to the point where we were triggered off – to find the sight, smell, touch or thought which reactivated the pattern. Just doing that will help lessen the tendency for it to happen again. The patterns still come up, but they don't take over the chemistry in the same way.

I still have quite deep-lying patterns from wartime that come up but they don't make a chemical change – there's just a judder as they go through. In fact if they don't come up I wonder where they've got to. As I'm about to step into a car or go on a long journey the old being says: 'Oh, you won't come back from this trip'. You just get used to it. If you grab at it or try to reject it, you build up the fantasies and get intimidated about what may happen because you don't know the difference between it and an intuitive warning. You just have to breathe on it and let it go. It gets less and less, but don't expect to completely deaden the deep-seated ones. Some you have to go along with.

I used to go home to see my mother who had no idea what I was doing, absolutely no clue whatsoever. She was only just adjusting to the fact that I was an actor, several years after I had stopped. She still reacted to the fact that I had a beard when I'd had it for about five or six years! She would tell me the same stories, time and time again – of old events and people who had died. You can't do anything right or philosophical in that situation. You just breathe, watch the tugs and pulls, the impatiences, and just let them wash through, as an exercise. It takes two to get out of a situation. If the other person doesn't want to get out, there's no way that you can tell them how to do it; there's no way you can describe what it's like out of it; there's no way you can suggest that they might like to get out of it because they've got no concept of what it is they are in! It's not our job to try to stir things up, or to enlighten old enemies, or parents, or people who are stuck. You merely go along with it as compassionately as possible, and if

they see a difference, deal with that as kindly as possible too, and maintain your own calm. It's very difficult for anyone who doesn't want to change and hasn't a glimmering of what it is we're doing and doesn't see the need for it, to understand what it is.

How do you recognize a genuine intuition?

An intuition is an understanding of the possibility of a future event. Sometimes a fear or emotion masquerades as an intuition but it can be distinguished through the meters of excitement or calm. In strict terms there is no looking into the future – what one does is to see the present moment very, very clearly beyond time and space; see the seeds of it and know what is likely to happen as a result of those seeds. In actual fact there doesn't have to be any knowing about it. If you are really in contact with centre, centre moves, having seen all possibilities ahead, and you just go with that centre. You don't even call it intuition. You just move naturally and instinctively with that flow. I work so often like this. I say or do something, or give someone something to do, without having a reason for it. The intuition is quite sufficient. Later, after and even has occurred, and someone has got something from it, I can give the reasons, but they haven't been negotiated. So if I relax and centre on someone, to find what their need is, something happens at the centre and a thought arises. It may tell them to go and have a ride on a bus without paying for it, or go out into the streets of Amsterdam without their knickers on, or get them to look in the mirror for twenty minutes and wait till the reflection smiles at them. You don't work those things out in mechanistic, technical terms.

Chapter 12

Dukkha (Suffering) – and Freedom

In the fifth century BC Lao-Tse spoke these words: ‘That the yielding conquers the resistant and the soft conquers the hard is a fact known to all men, yet utilized by none.’

During this twentieth century at the great Buddhist Council in Rangoon (1954-6), the following affirmation was made: ‘never in this world does hatred cease by hatred. Hatred ceases by love, and this is according to a law which has existed forever.’

On this day of Dhammacakka (the full moon in July) over 2,500 years ago, the Buddha proclaimed the sublime Dhamma for the first time and he pointed to these same things.

He pointed to Dukkha as a state of preference in the human species which rejects the soft yielding loving way.

He pointed to man’s unknowingness, the essential ignorance of his true nature which permits him to hear the truth but never to practise it.

He pointed to the confusion through which man corrupts and avoids the ancient wisdom wherever it appears because of his fear of the changes it would bring about in his behaviour if he were to practise it.

He did not say (as many have found it convenient to believe) that these sufferings are *in* human nature. He said they *are* human nature.

It is from Centre that we can observe this Suffering of which the Buddha spoke. It is the friction of misalignment – the fact of being out of sequence with the rhythm of the universe.

Wherever there is understanding of the basic suffering in Man, there is an immediate move towards freedom and this is when Man

begins to practise awareness. Yet the implications of that freedom destroy the whole structure built up through the development of the species. When we have a flavour of what freedom is we run screaming from it – back to the security of the pain of human nature.

Yet freedom is available in any moment – freedom from oughts and shoulds, from pasts and futures, from the whole dualism which brings us to birth and perpetuates our suffering. We pass it daily, moment after moment, not recognizing it, because we're looking for something else.

We are looking for freedom *within* the sensations of opposites that we are used to. We don't understand that the every happiness we seek is as much suffering as the unhappiness, because one cannot exist without the other.

It is 'my happiness' or 'my freedom' that one is seeking, but the idea of *possessing* a freedom rather than merely *being* free is dashing back into the cage of familiar sensations, and ignoring the freedom which is present in every moment.

Freedom doesn't exist in any of the opposites that you try to repeat or to avoid. It doesn't exist in anything you have to attain. It exists only in what you are ready to let go of, and what that letting go will reveal.

In that sense freedom is a revelation. A revealing, by peeling away, of all the things we like and hate and get identity from – people, objects, events. We are conditioned to exist in chains and to negotiate our suffering in order to feel the sensations which support the idea of ego.

We are conditioned and within the conditioning there is pain.

If we become unconditioned, then we lose all the sufferings which make up the human organism – and thus all identity.

Most desires for freedom are concerned with needs. Holding what one has against the peril of an ever-changing world, or avoiding

and pushing away what one does not want. Thus freedom is invariably expressed as ‘Having what I want’ or ‘Not having what I do not want’ without opposition from the world. Both these are personal and subjective attitudes, and take no account of the object or the laws governing the movements of that object.

A famous Zen story tells of the student who visited the Zen Master, and was asked why he wished to be instructed:

‘Sir, I wish to be free!’

‘Ah! Who holds you prisoner?’

There is no freedom in self-interest, for we are chained to our needs. There is no freedom in detachment or rejection, for there is no object to relate to – and without objects the world would cease to exist.

Martin Buber once wrote: ‘All reality is an activity which I share, without being able to appropriate it for myself. Where there is no sharing, there is no reality.’ This sharing relationship between subject and object, without clinging or rejecting is the greatest freedom human beings may know.

Much has been written and spoke of freedom *from the self*, as if this selfness were some permanent ogre whose slaves we are. It is a delusion born of human conceit, for the selfness is ever-changing, and in that change is ever free.

We do not have to fight for freedom or free ourselves *from* anything – merely realize our essential freedom. Freedom with the self and within the selfness is the way of awareness of things *as they are*. To hold on to the passing beauty is to have it die in your hands. To thrust away the passing moment of fear is to miss the moments of beauty it reveals as it passes.

In your daily life, when you have completed some action and are about to start something else, pause for a few seconds, close your

eyes and breathe. Then open your eyes and say, ‘In this moment I am free’. Try to see the world (your world) fresh and new in that moment.

This is the simple, loving, yielding way of the Buddhadhamma that we celebrate on the Dhammacakka Day.

Chapter 13

Some Definitions: Behaviour, Morality and Discipline

Behaviour refers to our general conduct, and depends on our attitude towards others and our opinion of the comparative importance of their life to our own. Our conduct will be expressed in our speech and actions in direct relationship to other people, and will be dictated by the force of our vanity or self-centeredness on the one hand, and our loving kindness and humility on the other.

Thus behaviour emerges as a clear mark of basic quality of character, for it bears witness to our opinion of ourselves, and the contempt or respect we hold for the rest of the world and for its opinions of us.

Consideration, respect, generosity, sympathy, willingness to listen, desire to help those in difficulty or distress are all spontaneously revealed in natural and unrehearsed actions and speech.

Equally, selfishness, thoughtlessness and lack of consideration are not accidents – they represent an attitude of mind which habitually only thinks in terms of ‘How does it affect me?’

Behaviour is never intentionally cruel or kind because it is not planned. It is a mirror which reflects accurately a state of mental or spiritual attainment. It is the measure of our quality.

Morality is essentially a knowledge of right or wrong. It is the doctrine and the practice of the duties of life. Whilst behaviour is spontaneous and quite revealing, morality has clear knowledge of duty and responsibility.

Morality is the spur, the conscience; it is the small voice which speaks insistently, no matter how many times ignored. It is our personal measure of quality, secret to us, hidden from the world.

Behaviour reveals our quality to others, but reveals nothing to us, because it is natural and spontaneous. Morality is that which prompts us, accuses us, commands us, knows what is right and what is wrong – our reaction to it makes us what we are.

Discipline is one of the most profound techniques for the attainment of peace of mind which has ever been expounded. It is also the most misunderstood.

Discipline does not advertise the secret happiness that it guards.

Its exterior is bleak and often forbidding, yet its doors are always open.

It contains infallible medicines and balm.

It provides a confessional of wisdom and kindness, and a therapy which cleanses and rejuvenates.

What is its relationship to behaviour and morality? It affects behaviour subtly by strengthening our moral “fibre”. As Right Action becomes more and more spontaneous, so morality takes on a texture of happiness, and with a growing feeling of the rightness of our actions, we relax and find peace with the world.

The discipline which has supported us becomes less and less a firm teacher, and emerges are a tender and loving friend, whose respect we value so vitally that we would rather die than betray their trust.

As with all things, discipline must be founded on Right Motive, for it is possible to train ourselves into a foolish sequence of action.

Thus discipline must be based on moral sense and followed at first with faith and later with the confidence of achievement.

To undertake discipline is an act of faith in one's own quality. It is a resolve to throw out the dross, whatever glib promises of happiness the dross parades before us.

In human relationships it is duty and moral responsibility, and it is love in action. It means putting down desired things for which we crave, in favour of the mental peace in doing what is morally right.

Much depends on the manner in which discipline is undertaken. The first requirement is of accepting in one's own heart the moral truth of any given situation or circumstance.

Secondly, one must quell remorse or regret for previous actions unless resolving at the same moment to do one's utmost to make amends and put things right. Otherwise, regret merely becomes an emotional token which is considerably more immoral than being unrepentant.

In a nutshell if, through lack of moral strength, one has caused harm or hurt, it is not the slightest use merely saying 'I am sorry', nor yet of being sorry, unless one can, through some element of personal discipline and sacrifice accept responsibility for the suffering caused, either by bearing it oneself, or wiping out the effects of one's actions, or making sure that any advantage gained through the actions are cancelled and not allowed to provide a foundation for any future actions.

This discipline is completely personal and is directed to ensuring that no future structure is built on the sands of a weak morality.

No matter how strong the morality which builds a house, and fills it with fine strong furniture, if at the time that the foundations were laid, the motives were not right – the house will fall.

Chapter 14

On Guilt

I believe that to be remorseful or feel guilty without doing anything about it is probably more immoral than the initial action. We may feel embarrassed, or flush or go cold at the memory of something, but we should try to find the chemistry of the compulsion which caused us to act in that particular way in the first place.

We should try to experience it as pure acquisition, aversion, or confusion, as a true knowing of the manipulation of the whole organism at a very primitive, obscene, selfish, cruel and violent level. If we can experience something at that chemical level, then the insight gained will invariably produce a change of behaviour, because of the peril we are in.

If we merely know ‘about it’ in terms of guilt and we possess that guilt, the next minute we can do the same thing with a different rationalization and reason. Then we really are in peril, but the peril of ignorance, rather than of the original compulsion.

We use guilt, self-criticism and pride to protect ourselves, in an apparently civilized, verbal way, from the primitive acquisitive, averse and confused characteristics which are the mark of human nature.

If some spontaneous act of giving flows from us then the quality of that flow at a chemical level may be observed and we know it is O.K. Likewise a rising chemistry of anger and heat, bringing up words, accusations and attack will, by its chemical quality, be revealed as something which is compulsive and violent and over which we have no control.

It is only by observing these things – in terms of the changing packages of earth and air and fire and water – that we will find any truth. It is only with the force of those experiences and sensations

that we will be able to do anything about it: continuing with a particular way because we know it flows easily and well, and in experiencing an adverse flow, knowing it is perilous to our peace and to our skill.

We must practise our way out of areas that we don't want to be in.

Watch and know that if you haven't practised then it's your own fault if you don't get the result you want.

If you go walking in your rose garden and find it full of cabbages, then you know at the time for planting roses you were not very mindful. It isn't helpful to say 'It's not my fault – someone distracted me – someone sold me the wrong packet – nobody told me it wasn't a rose.'

No matter how much we bemoan the fact that we are not appreciated, that somebody always puts us down, or that a person is habitually cruel to us, we have invited it by our body language, and by our chemistry.

We produce it, we 'advertise' it and then we are surprised when we get the response. If we are not satisfied with life, all we have to do in any given moment is to change the posture, the breathing, and the muscle pattern, and we are free.

Freedom is a very threatening thing. Terrifying. With freedom we don't have any other sensations – and we are creatures, we are beings, of sensation.

Plant your roses – not thinking about, or feeling guilty about the cabbages. Be grateful that you have glimpsed a rose and someone is teaching you how to grow them. As often as you protest you want a rose, go and plant one.

Be quite honest with yourself. For your ego needs, your insecurities, your fears and your sensual appetites, you need cabbages. To take you on into a brighter future, you need roses. All

you have to do is let go of the cabbages – you don't have to push them away.

Nobody ever became a good Buddhist by burning Christians. People go around knocking a previous belief which gave them great comfort and help because they think they've found something better. That's ridiculous – it must be lifted up into a new awareness. Change the way you state it and the way you practise. Don't knock it, because it was once you.

If you practise *Now*, then you will have something which is the potential expressing itself in the future. You don't have to re-arrange or re-organize or put right anything that is in the past. All you have to do is practise in the present moment with a new clarity, and let the future take care of itself. That's all. So there's no room for remorse and guilt.

Chapter 15

Shikan Taza & Some Questions on Meditation

I'd like you to feel for an awareness of the edges of your being, an extension of the actual area of flesh covered by skin. The sensitivity just outside the skin knows when something is close to it – as a tingle of the electrical or magnetic field around the body. Try to put your attention in that, rather than in any of the senses – almost like putting your attention into the fine hairs that cover the body.

The more you cultivate that tingle of awareness around the edges, rather than getting entangled with individual senses which alternate and distract you into thinking, the more you will find Ki, and Shikan Taza, which is what I'm introducing at the moment. 'Shikan Taza' has, like most Japanese phrases, several possible meanings. In a literal sense it means 'just exactly, hitting the point', 'the arrow hitting the point of sitting'. In other words it is 'just this'.

The quality of attention is cellular. In the same way that one Globes, one is feeling for the outer edges of the body as a cell, with just the one sense of feeling or contact.

In actual fact that is all there is – all the five senses are specializations of the one sense of feeling, and all those senses are interchangeable. There is just one level of concentration serving the whole so that attention isn't split. Then we can lose the involvement of ego identity, possessivenesses, rejectivenesses, emotional opinions and the direct, provocative link with memory that comes through separating things into individual senses. So, in specializing in one feeling of sensation on the surface, we refine the quality of our attention. The one sense of contact is what we want to find in the meditative form of Shikan Taza. By 'meditative form' I do not mean just a sitting form, but an awareness which receives sense

impressions, and transmits them directly to the point at centre, where they are experienced in a very clear, pure and magnified way. It is said that in sitting Shikan Taza, one can hear a spider walking across the floor, and it's true; but it has to be a pure quality of attention, not looking or feeling for anything as it touches the tingle area around you.

The analogy or picture of Shikan Taza often given, is of two samurai facing each other with their swords drawn in a hot, dusty area of a village. There are sounds of villagers gathering, dogs barking, children crying, mosquitos buzzing. Their clothes are hot and sticky, their feet are moving in the sand, and the central point of attention is the two pairs of eyes meeting. Whilst there is awareness of all the sounds at the periphery, and of the feet on the sand, the attention never wavers from centre as it communicates with the other centre through the eyes. If, for a moment, one of them loses that concentration, they are dead.

That is the quality of Shikan Taza. In meditation it comes to a peak when you change gear, put in the turbo boost, and produce that external tingle of awareness; and very often considerable heat rises from the body.

An interesting way to feel this quality is to stand with your eyes closed and your head down. Ask a friend to throw a ball to you as your head comes up and before you open your eyes. If you bring your head up on an in-breath or a held breath and then open your eyes, your reaction time will be slow – you will tend to jump and either be hit by the ball or miss catching it completely. If you raise your head on an out-breath and open your eyes as the ball is thrown, you will find you have all the time in the world to deflect or catch it. You have already let go of anxiety tension, and the established pattern of who you are, before the ball comes to you. That is very specifically the difference between relaxation and tension, and it operates just as well whether it

is a ball coming to you, someone throwing a dart, or someone saying something to you. Sometimes there are people throwing verbal darts at you, and if you're not breathing or not balanced, the dart will hit you in the vital point.

As one develops sensitivity, one is aware of things from this forcefield. Some of the finest martial artists operate just as well with their eyes blindfold or in the dark. This is intuition, but not out of thin air; it is a collating of information from the extension of the senses, or from memory, and it has to be responded to immediately, or it's corrupted. One is open but not looking for things to relate to, merely waiting for them to arrive. It's a state of readiness rather than anticipation.

We're talking about hearing and seeing, not about listening and looking. Just to sit, in a completely darkened room or an exposed space without old patterns of fear or anxiety, or ideas about what might or could happen – so that all you receive is exactly what is happening. Once the idea 'Is there something in this room?' arises, the tingle is jangled and anxious. Clear all the mental objects and receive only what is coming in. No preconceptions, no expectations, no fantasy, no selection, no preference; not listening for a sound which will either reassure or confirm one's fears – not listening *for* anything, merely hearing.

The moment you change from hearing to listening you've gone from the one sense of receiving sensation into a specific sense which is linked with memory patterns and expectations. Before that you are hearing anything that arises – it doesn't get past the point of identification – you don't do anything with it – there is just a hearing until something requires attention, and then the process is very, very swift. If someone creeps in and a blow is about to descend, you make a movement and deflect the blow. If you are listening for it, you're dead almost before the blow is struck.

Most people could benefit from bringing up their level of sensitivity generally and turning it outwards to see what is actually present in the world rather than having it always turned inwards towards mental objects, old patterns and ghosts, which tend to be self-conscious and anxious. Of course you need to be Globing and only let in things which are conducive and pleasant and of your vibration.

Having brought up the sensitivity you can let it rest or extend it at will, but you are also protected by the globe so that you experience things, but are not assaulted or bruised by them. If you open up without Globing at that level of sensitivity you can actually get black and blue. It is the difference between being protected and yet in contact with the world at a real level, and being so defended that you are totally self-involved. We can bring into our everyday life this quality of alertness. Each time we go into overdrive a little remains and improves the general quality of our vitality and concentration. The greedy attention of the senses centred in the head is lessened, and we work more from the belly, which makes the breathing lower and lessens the raking up of old patterns and old beings.

This quality of attention is for living: it protects you in the same way as Globing and prevents you getting into dangerous situations – it can be put out miles ahead if necessary, there's no limit to it. Bring it out, move in it, and then get used to it. It tends to get a bit hot sometimes, but there's clarity in the head, colours are brighter, tastes are more acute and one hears more clearly.

While doing the sitting Shikan Taza, there's a kind of grip around the front, it's not comfortable.

You may be pushing the attention out too hard. Slacken off and push out with the muscles of the mind and not the muscles of the body. It could also be connected with the pressure of the tongue which is the

only muscle attached at just one end. Try to rest the tongue more gently.

Should we breathe through our mouth during meditation?

As long as the breathing is unrestricted, that's fine, but I have found that in allowing the breath to go out through the mouth, the jaw relaxes more and then the whole body follows. After you have established relaxation and the throat is open you can breathe through the ears, it doesn't really make any difference.

A lot of saliva is being produced, and accumulates in the mouth.

Just let it dribble. Sometimes saliva does come up in the mouth. It's a natural process – it can arise because you are thinking about food or because of jaw tension. If the occlusion between the upper and lower teeth is tight it will produce saliva.

Rōshi, I have a problem of what to put the attention on – whether it's the tip of the thumbs or the tongue, or more central?

I've answered this question so many times. The thumbs and the tongue are just an aid to concentration. Put them there, let them remain there, then forget them. Hopefully they will stay put. If you find that the tongue, the tip of which should be resting lightly against the back of the top front teeth, has dropped then patiently put it back. Your attention may be on the periphery or at the centre, believe it or not. Just go and do it, and stop thinking about whether it's right or wrong. You must take your courage in both hands and say: 'I am the nucleus of this cell', and then you feel it. There is a process, the cell is aware and it all streams into the centre point. You're not looking for anything, that's the whole thing, you're not looking for anything. You are just receiving, so sit there patiently waiting to receive something,

and if something presents itself to your consciousness then put the attention on that point at centre. No more. It's all happening in there.

I feel fairly certain that the kind of awareness you described I have had at other times when I didn't have a name for it or know what it was. What I'm really asking is, why can't I do it now that I know more about it? I could do it when I didn't know what I was doing, why can't I do it now?

That's the key to the whole sickening business, you see, that one has to be aware of it. Many people who have never heard about meditation or relaxation put the attention on the out-breath, and just sit quietly, and they go straight through into quite a profound meditation. Then human nature arises and says: 'I want it again', and it may take them years to get to that particular point again. There is the freshness and clarity of beginner's mind which does something without concepts, and then the whole progression to Zen mind, which finds that quality of freshness in every moment; it's not so much that it recaptures the innocence of the beginner's mind, but it progresses to the innocence of the beginner's mind by having let go of, and seen the futility of, all the concepts that the beginner piles on after they have had that first innocent experience.

Chapter 16

What Is Hand?

What is the difference between the fact and the reality of a hand?

Four fingers, thumb, palm, front and back, creases, folds, nails, blood, bone, water, grease, sweat, mucus – hand.

The sound of which clapping may only be heard but not listened to.

Reality is Earth and Air and Fire and Water existing in Space. Take that into ‘a hand’ and the reality is a radiation of light and heat revolving in space with particles ever changing and continuing.

We halt that process in any particular moment and we say: ‘This is hand – it works as a hand, it functions as a hand and it does things which a hand is supposed to do.’

We are prepared to put our hand into a moving stream and say: ‘The stream is moving through my fingers, and it is not the same stream because it is continually in change.’ We fail to notice that the hand is moving equally rapidly and hold on to the idea of ‘my hand’. If we let go of that idea there is a wonderful moment when we see both hand and stream flowing, and perhaps feel a releasing followed by joy and laughter. At some point we say: ‘Ah! I want my hand back’, but we can never view the hand in quite the same way again.

In order to say: ‘I have a hand’ one must first establish as a fact the idea ‘me’ and ‘mine’ and to do this reality has to be halted. Look at the so-called question: ‘Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?’ Somewhere in the development of the species there is a point when what issues from the egg is no longer egg but has become chicken. The reality of continual change is halted and we say, at this point, chicken.

Similarly we halt the flow of reality in a dualistic world and, within the terms of comparative truth, reinforce the idea we exist by saying: ‘This is hand’.

What is more important is that we can also halt the suffering of ideas of fact by going into the reality of continual change.

The importance of any kind of insight is that afterwards we can never permit ourself to have the same attachment to any fact as solidly and determinedly and as graspingly and clingingly as we have before. That can’t be worked out intellectually – it has to come through inner questioning. Then we can bring out a little of the treasure to permit us to see the reality within this mass of facts we’ve got ourselves trapped in.

The arising of joy as one comes into the moment by examining realities and fact does produce certain chemical changes in the body – some people lose a leg, others a hand, some people fall down, and others shimmer for a few minutes as if they’re in the Start Trek transporter room. Every mental experience has a sensory experience linked to it producing a chemical change. If there is a profound experience – simply the fact of coming into the moment – then there will be a comparable chemical change which adjusts the being, depending on the depth of that experience and its acceptability to the organism at that particular moment.

In one of the Buddha’s dialogues someone said: ‘You continually say “this” and “this” and “this” and the Buddha said: ‘Yes, for the purpose of communication and teaching I use the realm of comparative truth, but I am not entangled with the ideas.’

So we use the ‘fact’ of hand but right at the core of the being there is a knowledge that it is not ‘true’. If the attachment is then less, there is more wisdom and integrity in the way one relates to objects, events and people. One know it is only the attachment for identify

which keeps objects, events and people actually in existence in the manner to which we have become accustomed.

Within our life a hand fulfils many functions and can symbolize our contact with people, so it is a very specific and most preciously held object.

We are attached to facts and ideas and concepts, whether they’re called hand, lover, house or dog. The moment we free ourselves from the attachment to the fact then there is a releasing of other attachments to other important facts. First there is a grieving for the so-called ‘loss’ of a fact, followed by relief and laughter at the ridiculousness of it all – and then joy arises.

Chapter 17

Male and Female

The relationship of male with female has been much misunderstood and distorted. Essentially, the male organism is penetrative and the impulse is from the centre outwards. Thus sensually and sexually, the male urge towards personal integration of being is outward toward externals. The female organism is the opposite. Sensual perception and sexual needs commence in externals and end at the centre. For one, the world is around it and for the other, it is around the world.

The female aspect is at its most positive when reaching out mentally to externals and expressing caring compassion through intellect. The male aspect is at its most positive when turning inwards mentally to the intuitive, caring feminine aspect and penetrating its own nature.

When these two aspects are aware of each other's function and needs, and are sufficiently developed to relinquish their self-nature – there is a perfect union of Love and Wisdom.

If either male or female is complete, and there is an inner union of male and female within them, then they are able to receive and to give at a level which is non-needing, non-demanding and non-manipulative.

It is a comparatively rare and amazing kind of relationship when you get two people, both of whom are internally sexually fused.

Thee are four possible kinds of contact between any two organisms, which can be crudely stated as male to male, female to female, male to female and female to male.

I have said before than when any two organisms meeting, the first thing that has to be sorted out and understood is what the potential sexual relationship between them is – until then no real

contact can be established. It will happen just as surely in the relating between a human being and an animal, or a flower, or anything that has a kind of sentient life: the only difference lies in the speed of the decision.

That is the first negotiation. Then, in the traditional way of relating and, because of the tendency for someone who is genitally male or genitally female to believe they are totally that, there are probably two relationships possible. The first is the well-known me-Tarzan, you-Jane, that is male to female, and there is the possibility of another one of the four, in support of that first one. These are relationships based on need – where there is an investment of identity in objects, events and people. As that is let go and there is more self-contentment, there is a possibility of the other relationships opening, and we will call that relating. What we all obviously have to try to do is get to that point of relating, rather than being trapped within the traditional kind of relationship.

A very completed receiving is a very completed act of giving. It's a letting go, an opening. It's accepting and taking in something from someone else in the spirit it has come, without trying to transform it into the way you would like to receive it or to take it. Mostly when people get into trouble with the difference between taking and receiving it is because they try to insist that the things they want to happen, happen in their way and not in the way it's coming from the other person. It happens at a verbal level quite often, and it's quite subtle. Someone asks a question and I answer and they say, 'Ah, it's like such and such'; they haven't taken what I've said, they've tried to translate it into something they already have, which is comfortable. *Nothing is **like** anything else.* Take the answers, the words, the gifts but don't try to translate them into the way *you would like to have them*; that is either a form of taking or a rejection of what is coming.

It doesn’t matter whether it’s an explanation, a gift, an act of affection or love, it is all the same. In that sense, receiving is the act of giving.

If any being, comprised of two distinct parts (which should be in union) takes as its identity one aspect of that union, and believes itself to be solely that, then it will be continually manipulating the reflection or the projection of the other aspect of itself in the world. If there is the idea that someone who happens to be biologically born with male physical characteristics is all male, then the objects, events and people in whom identity is invested, will be of a particular kind; that maleness or structuring characteristic will be self-focused and self-centred and will believe its maleness, whether intellectually, psychologically or sexually, to be the most important aspect. This is usually what produces the problems in male sexuality, because ultimately what has to be understood is that the thing that makes a man a good lover is not his masculinity but his femininity – how else could he understand woman? The classic male right-sided being that rejects the feminine characteristics within itself, will do the same towards women in the world – taking, demanding, imposing, (women obviously will do a comparable opposite). When there is no dependency upon external objects, events or people there is a wholeness and from that can come a true and full exchange. Otherwise you get two people both taking and that’s just sexual karate!

We put our needs into objects, events and people out there, and make them vital to our identity, or to our security of being, and that becomes a taking need.

It becomes something that we demand or invite, or make subtle signals for. At a particular level we need food and certain activities of the body to sustain us, since we’re living in the human world but if the need is one which is vital to our identity and our security, that’s a totally different matter.

When we feed off objects, events and people it diminishes us.

If we let go of the investment of identity in those needs, and come to ease and calm and contentment with what is present in any moment, then the beauty and purity of our relationship with events and people and objects in every moment is of a high quality and there is no dependency in it.

At that point we become of value in the world, and are able to enter into some kind of exchange and sharing, which is interdependence – the understanding, in mundane terms, that there is such a thing as here and there, but we are not tangled up in it, or dependent on it. We know that we are in relationship with everything else in the world, but we don't compare; we don't say that one thing is more important than another, one thing is better than another, because that means we have a dependency upon the better things to give us a better identity, and we ignore the beauty in the things which are not traditionally regarded as beautiful or pleasant.

That reduces the level and number of descriptions one has in the world. It also reduces what might be called anger to fire or heat rising. One accepts that there are mental and emotional states, but says: 'there is' rather than 'I have'; thus we un-hook our dependency on them for our identity.

Many people have anger or some other emotion as an object or event on which they rely for identity, because of the sensations and the feelings of strength or pleasure or righteousness that it gives them.

As we are un-hooking from the dependency on things, then our attitude changes, and we see them increasingly as elements – as air and earth and fire and water, revolving in space.

We don't see any difference between a set of conditions here and a set of conditions there. We observe, within the discipline of understanding, that this object, which is regarded by the world as

beautiful, contains as many traps when we associate ourselves with it, as this object which is called ugly and which we try to avoid or feel superior to.

These two things, the beautiful and the ugly, the right and the wrong, the pleasant and the unpleasant, are in fact air and earth and fire and water revolving in space. Essentially we see no difference, and that means within us there is no difference, which means that we are clear and calm.

We can have preferences, we can say we like such and such, but if it isn't available, it doesn't matter, and we mean it.

The whole realm of suffering of human beings is based upon two things – 'Getting What We Don't Want' or 'Wanting What We Don't Get'.

Where we have a need and an investment of identity in objects, events or people, then we are either in a situation of getting what we don't want or wanting what we don't get.

When what arises is sufficient, and we see it clearly and in depth, then we are content. Then we are of some use to this world and to other people.

Until we have let go of that we are a burden, and we are prone to enter into conspiracies with other people's needs and investments, and play the most elaborate games to sustain each other in the avoidance of the aloneness.

Within that, the whole realm of the difference between receiving and taking, and between giving and imposing, are clearly seen.

We sometimes subject other people to the most horrific moral, mental and physical pressures in order to insist that they have in their life what we think they ought to have – then we compound the felony by saying we're doing it out of love. If love means that everything in your world is a reflection of you and has been arranged by you, I don't think much of it. For a large section of the community, well-educated

in this error, this is family life – doing what you're told – being possessed – doing what's good for you.

When I am presented with problems in people's relationships I find precisely the same problems arising with the inner relationship between the right and the left side, the so-called male and female, in that person. The right side of the being can behave like a male chauvinist pig to the left side of the being *in both men and women,* and that balance has to be reorientated.

It can be done by a temporary immobilization of the right side – not in a harsh or rejecting way, but just a holding back to allow the left side to develop, if possible, towards a total ambidexterity.

When you start adjusting the physical balance you are dealing with vital energies that go deeply into the organism. When both sides are operating with some kind of mutuality and understanding, the centre of operations sinks lower and lower, until there is a fusion at centre.

At whatever level we look at it, the point of union, for both male and female, is this point here at centre, which is why it's the point of meditation. You find this is in the symbolism of the so-called 'erotic' painting of the East. It's not erotic, it's highly spiritual, because it represents that union. If we can bring that about within ourselves then we have a complete being to offer to somebody else.

The Taoists say some interesting things in this area: they tend to symbolize it in either sexual or gender terms. The basic statement is that when the male and the female aspect in physical, psychic or intellectual terms are not in harmony, then the ideal union between yang and yin, right and left, is lost and then we have lost the art of immortality. Mortality arises because the art of that union has been lost. In physical terms they say that when the art of sexual union is lost, misused or is not skilful then all manner of ailments of the body arise, and when the art is fulfilled then all physical ailments are

automatically treated or the antidote arises within the energy of the body.

You can also take that in terms of the inner union, of male or female, or in terms of the relationship between the intellect and the emotions. When the resources at a physical, psychic or spiritual level are interacting harmoniously and the ancient skills are applied, then there is immortality, because the union of male and female is representative of the union of heaven and earth. When that union is imperfect, in other words when there is a taking rather than a giving then mortality arises, and with mortality ageing, sickness and death arise. So there, we're now entering the Taoist phase.

The right-sided aspect of the male contains both the macho and the structuring, logical mind. The left side includes the little boy, and of course the homosexual factor. Sometimes these two sides never really meet.

For the female, basically the left side is the girl and the right side is the mother. That is the more organizing, controlling, supplying part.

There is a classic pattern of relationship between the left side of the man and the right side of the woman – the mother-little boy syndrome with all its games of tantrums and sexuality!

The factor which comes to maturity in the right side of the female, is not only mother, but also the career woman, and it is a dominant factor. In some cultures this factor is recognized, and a woman can be a complete woman. In the West, it hasn't really happened that way. It's gone into a sort of negative masculinity, or even worse the masculinity's gone into a negative femininity.

It's a vast subject, and I'm dealing with it simplistically, but there's no doubt that the more the intuitive aspect understands the working of reason and intellect, and the more the reason and intellect understand the working of the intuitive, the more possibility there is

of a contact between faith and knowledge blending to produce a loving wisdom.

There are many different layers of consciousness within every being, from the gross to the higher. Sexuality can be either – the higher the level the more the tendency is to fusion. Orgasm without thought for the partner may well be satisfying, but it is erotic rather than sexual. It is the preoccupation of one part of the being which is taking more than its share.

Freak out – whether by passionate encounter or by hallucinogen, which is also reaction to external stimuli stirring the store-consciousness to produce hitherto unimagined patterns into conscious registration but not liberating them from their prison storehouse, is passive and cannot lead to insight or wisdom. It can produce an unusual self-consciousness – and a certain honest expression of confusion – which is one step better than blind apathy or anxiety neuroses – but that is where it ends.

If there is no development from that point of honesty, the expression of confusion itself becomes the end point rather than the means.

If we look at the sexual act as such, there is an idea it is a primitive urge primarily for reproduction – there's much more to it than that. We have to accept that in any organism, the first experience is the single cell from which the dualistic organism develops. That single cell is corrupted into multiplication by the need for sensation. It needs a dualistic set-up in order to have sensation and to split itself into here and there.

So the true urge, both in sexuality and also in meditation – because the two are immensely close together – is for fusion – back into oneness.

Insight is the fusion of the two aspects of being within the meditator, meeting at the point of sexual union. Which is why, and I'm

not being flippant, if you want to improve your sex life, improve your meditation; the backward circle and the out-breath are the very essence of the best sexual activity. Everything that can go wrong with sexuality is contained in the forward circle and a rather quick, sharp in-breath.

The true urge between beings is thus not reproductive in motive, but a need for integration of both aspects. When there is a holding to ritual roles of male and female in society then there is a denial of those most basic needs. Ideals are sought in personal relationships, dependent upon conditioned memories, and there is an attraction to the idealized rather than the ideal. In denying their positive aspects, men invariably remain shackled to the concepts of virility and women to protective cosseting which perpetuate it.

In unaware societies restless needs to break free from the rituals result in women adopting male attitudes and challenging men in a male way – thus denying their own femininity and increasing the latent little boy/homosexuality of the males. That they succeed only in aping the other's negative characteristics is inevitable.

The influence of Christian dogmatic attitudes about the 'original' sinfulness of Man, and the seducing agency of Woman as a tool of the Devil through sexual knowledge – explaining much of the resentful domination and sexual dependence of Western man on 'their' woman – has made it extremely difficult, here in the West, to experience a loving rapport without a chemical reaction of sexual feelings or guilts.

This is probably the greatest barrier to mental freedom.

The role and place of women in oriental societies is quite different, and although they may seem similarly structured 'against' women, the positive femininity of the oriental women and the love and respect accorded to her by 'her' men-folk, is something the West can seldom appreciate.

Likewise, consider the difference between the religious attitudes of praying for others and the world, and the contemplative self-awareness which is concerned only with filling the being with the fourfold attitudes of loving-kindness, compassion, tranquillity and sympathetic joy, before overflowing, without any form of ‘self’ consciousness, to others.

These are the basic oppositions of attitudes in Eastern and Western systems. Of course this is not to suggest or imply that self-centredness, cruelty, conceit and sensual preoccupation do not exist in the East – of course they do – but the attitudes to them and about the way to relinquish them are different.

The oldest philosophical observation in the world is that you can never influence others, only yourself. No woman will be liberated by denying her femininity – any more than man will by denying his masculinity. The one becomes pent up sensually and externally, the other emotionally and internally. Both become users of the other.

Chapter 18

Communication

Enter a room, a space or an activity and receive it, as it is, without preconception, assumption or paranoia on past ideas or events.

Communicate with what is present without challenge, apology, suspicion, performance, or withdrawal or denial of one's presence.

Speaking is often used unmindfully, compulsively and so-called spontaneously. It then gets in the way of understanding and serves neither speaker nor listener.

Compare that with the quality of communication coming from the centre of the being which can exist in silence, quietness or in mindful speaking. If that quality existed more frequently the amount of misunderstanding, confusion, paranoia, suspicion, doubt and suffering caused in the world through communication, would be substantially reduced.

As you enter any space ask yourself what being, what role, what identity is rising in that moment in order to be active? Follow that by asking what that identity is trying to prove. What is the age, the character, and the objective of the internal voice that comments as you enter any kind of situation.

The inner dialogue is one of the principal agents of that suspicion, self-doubt and paranoia; when that internal chatter dies down it's a marvellous feeling, and it is within reach of anyone undertaking this practice.

The 6th Chinese Zen patriarch said: 'Stop the talking, stop the thinking, and there's nothing you'll not understand.'

It is partly a question of tidying up the filing systems of ideas, concepts and opinions from which much of the talking arises. Then,

having observed what measure of identity and comfort speaking gives you, ease yourself away from the attachment to it. Then speaking will come from the right place, at the right time, and about the right thing.

If you just ease back a little from the verbal thinking, you will find yourself sinking nearer and nearer into thought, which is where the real action takes place.

Then you can make choices, which means there is no conditioned entity between the belly and the lips to screw up the communication.

All things being considered there’s really not much more we can say about that, is there?

Chapter 19

Communication and Transmission

In the pure interaction between beings there is something we can call communion.

I have noticed in many different situations that when self-consciousness is out of the way and all energies are focused upon one common activity there is this communion, and within that, communication is just an expression or a support of that communion.

When self-interest or insecurity of being arises then communication becomes wild, divisive and devious because it has a need, an axe to grind, a motive, a goal. At that point, because of separation of the group consciousness, there is negotiation expressed in different forms of cleverness, explanation, apology or commentary. If we are hoping to find a place from which to communicate in a safe and mature way which isn't destructive either of ourselves or of the world around us, then we must find that place of communion – the place of no needs, and of nothing to prove.

Each being is in itself a commune or host to many beings, ideas and attitudes. In any one moment this organism is the sum total of every experience it has had throughout its whole history, and in any action, activity or communication the whole organism and all that experience must be used to celebrate and honour that particular moment.

True communication, whether with a single person, a group or within ourselves, is whole and unselfish, sacrificing or letting personal considerations of any one aspect of that whole, to be totally appropriate, true and real in that moment.

That is the ideal, and as I have said many times before, we have to express the ideal, even if we may be doubtful about its achievement.

We start with the purest state of communion, which is then corrupted into communication in ‘egotistical’ terms. The dependency on objects, events and people is the force that drives that communication, quite falsely and in vain, to try to gain security for the being from external things. This has to be let go through an understanding of the total *interdependence*, not just of this being with all other beings, but of all aspects of this being within itself. Then there is an independence based on lack of dependency on any other being, object or event for security and identity. At that point transmission place – the transmission from the purest point of the organism through all its parts.

As a chemical impulse in any one single cell transmits itself through the whole organism, so that transmission from the pure, excellent point at the centre of the being spreads through the whole organism, and the whole organism acts as one. It is not split, or separated.

One of the principal routes to this state is the continual understanding and recognition, in each moment, that there are no needs and there can be no needs – that there is indeed nothing to prove and nothing to fear.

Transmission takes place between teacher and the student because of the submission to the contract they have. It is the submission of identity and self-centred considerations to permit other energies to be passed on. It is the yielding or offering that permits it to take place. First submission, then transmission that feeds in direct knowing at a non-form level, centre to centre.

Sometimes the words are provocative to the mind which tries to block them off. Sometimes you will not remember the words, but you

will remember the knowing you received at gut level – but if the contract and the submission exist, then transmission will take place.

Transmission can take place at any time, and it doesn't have to have words. It happens when there is attention and agreement. If you submit to the possibility of transmission you will be met.

There are lines out, the message is being broadcast all the time, all you have to do is tune in – nothing more.

Chapter 20

The Games People Play

There are many different levels of games and awareness of them. Maybe we have to call some of them roles, some of them devices, some of them excuses.

We play three principal games in the world. One, of being isolated and alone – ostracized, outcast; another of being mad or of going mad; a third around death. We say to the world: 'You will reject me', 'You will drive me mad' or 'You will kill me', 'I will cut myself off from the world and then you will see how valuable I am', or 'I will make myself ill or mad or will kill myself, then you will be sorry'. Those are the basic games.

Along with those basic games there are particular roles that we play in order not to have those games taken to their fullest extent. It is only with the little games that we play, that we begin to understand the big games at the back of them. Once we begin to see the full implication then, depending on our nature, we either reinforce and try to blackmail the world even more, we change the game subtly, or it brings us up with a jolt and we don't play the game so heavily – but we try to negotiate a place from which we can still play.

What we rely on is the world responding to our game and preventing us from going the whole way. If the world allowed us to play out our games – proceeding with great rapidity towards our death, madness or rejection we'd stop playing the game pretty damn quick.

But the world tries to pull us back, because we are being identified in people's minds by the games that we play, because of the games that they play.

If only they'd let us go to the precipice and look over we'd run back pretty quickly and wouldn't play the madness, death or social ostracism game any more. We'd become decent, responsible members of society. We would begin to give, rather than to take. All the games are taking what we want on the best terms, with the best rate of interest possible. A great deal of so-called giving is a very subtle form of taking. In the giving we don't let go. It's having a penny on a piece of string, putting it in the slot machine, having a free pee and pulling the string back into our pocket.

The programme is always the same: 'If I do this to the world, people will do that and I will get what I want.' No matter what it is, the decision is made and the odds are calculated. Nobody merely goes mad, they make a decision to do it. They may go in further than they expect, but they do it deliberately until it is challenged by somebody who has already played that game and gone mad and then they don't play that one any more. These final games are there as a potential in every moment and you make the decision just how much to play.

The word schizophrenia is readily bandied around. Let's accept that our natural state is schizoid, and that we leap from one role to another; let's also accept that our view of the world as we see it is deluded, because this is human nature. If, under the pressure of circumstances, we apply a magnifying glass to our own true nature, then we will see that it is a series of separate phenomenal events – unconnected and yet related – in the same way as a series of still pictures gives an impression of a moving picture when they are flashed at a particular speed. If we take that fragmentation which is the true state of things 'personally' and not impersonally from a point of calm, then we will break up with it – we will apply the fragmentation to ourselves. Because we identify ourselves with objects, events and people in the world, we believe that we live in those objects, events and people. If our belief in that reality is

destroyed, we also feel destroyed because of our relationship with them. Yet, if one sees these same fragmentary and phenomenal events arising in second after second from a point of impersonality and calm, that is enlightenment.

So it is said that there is no difference between the enlightened man and the unenlightened man, except that the enlightened man knows it. It's a matter of choice: until the need is seen, the urge is strong enough and the priorities are right, then liberation will not be practised. The value is to make it available so that people have the choice whether to practise it or not. No more can you do, and the only way you can make it available is by demonstrating it, and being as equally compassionate to those who don't practise as you are to yourself when you don't practise! Don't have opinions about it, because the moment you do you get into ideas of good and bad and right and wrong – which is very much non-practice.

The value of having gone to the point of madness yourself and come back from it, enables you to spot the games that other people play, and to confront them in the right way. It is merely 'I know, I've been there', and not a challenge. You can be of value to the point where you've experienced some of your own games.

If you react violently to someone's game you can bet your life that that is one that you haven't quite sorted out yourself. Otherwise you would see it with compassion. So we come back to skill again.

Chapter 21

AIDS: A Planetary View

At the present time the whole planet is suffering from AIDS, which is an extreme abuse of natural resources and functions.

AIDS has become the symbol of a problem which has always been with us, and is putting it under a magnifying glass.

Where identity is related to and dependent on materialistic, dualistic things, it will go to ever-increasing extremes in order to satisfy those needs. The identity however which arises from inner patterns of activity, becomes smaller and smaller, and eventually disappears into a point of reality where completely different considerations, in terms of security of being and actions in the world, present themselves.

The best way of dealing with AIDS – whether physically as a virus disease, or planetary – is to follow a path of honouring resources of the body or the planet rather than abusing them.

This relates specifically to our own personal practice, as people who are following a way of meditation and relaxation. There is the pure path leading to the celebration of the moment and there are the barriers to that path, which produce materialistic and petty considerations of time, space, social acceptability and preference in terms of sensation.

The moment these barriers get in the way, our immune system, which is geared to providing a filter and protection from the violences and tensions of the world at a cellular, psychic and physical level, breaks down and we are on the road to an Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome in our spiritual life.

One of the most devastating things about the AIDS virus is that it mimics the crusading self. There is devotion to a practice, and an

old being threatened by this, changes its mask and appears to go along with it as a way of holding on to old patterns. It mimics or masquerades as a new being trying to do the practice.

At the present time we have the culmination of a pattern of behaviour related to the search for identity and security of being through interaction between people – particularly through sexual identity. The less we go to extremes and the nearer we get to the moment, the more we have the antidote to AIDS, or any of the other sexually transmitted diseases – herpes, cervical cancer, etc.

The prevention and cure are of exactly the same order.

Whether that means that the way of celibacy or non-indulgence in sexual activity is both the prevention and the cure, remains to be seen.

There are spiritual practices from many different cultures which can help us. One is the idea of the door-keeper at the gate of consciousness who examines everything to see if it is relevant, up-to-date and wholesome. If it is not, it is not allowed in. That prevents an influence taking over the organism, performing certain acts, and then retreating leaving us to bear the consequences.

I have described it as a Protective Globe, a permeable membrane through which only the wholesome and up-to-date can come. Nothing more complicated than litmus paper which turns blue if the wrong substance is passed through it.

Do you deliberately and consciously extend a globe of protection around yourself every morning so that when you hit a situation, you already have the protection established, rather than having to bring up something quickly to deal with it?

Globing must be an automatic protection that one trusts in every department of life – driving a car or walking through a shopping centre – as a monitor of speech, ego patterns and reactions. It diverts and steers you away from trouble, which means it affects your

choices, whether of speech or action – word selection or activity selection. It has to come from a point of faith in the protection and sanctuary of the practice, which is superior to the usual spontaneous and habitual ego reactions.

Practise in easy, safe situations: pat your belly, feel for your globe and say to this centre place which is the core of your establishment – 'Now exercise me, instruct me'. Permit yourself to be told to turn left, turn right, as if you had an instructor with you. Let your belly lead, and exercise you for half an hour. Get accustomed to having a tug and following it.

The idea that the only way to come to freedom is through pain and suffering is just licence for further suffering which we inject into our ideas of time.
And there ain't no such thing!

There is only the idea of being moving from one point to another and failing to see the separate identities in that flow of activity.

Time is merely a projection of identity.

We always have time because we create it.

Time is a creation not a fact.

Time is created in the same way that words and dualism are created in conventional terms.

It doesn't really exist, therefore it ceases to be a valid excuse for anything – except ego pain – for which it is the ultimate excuse.

If we can be in a state of sanctity and peace that is not dependent on external things, then the body will be immune from all external attacks.

There will be an understanding that external things are not dangerous until a reaction takes place, or until we create, from our own fear, some external thing which is dangerous to us.

We must feel, believe, and know at a chemical level of insight, as well as an intellectual level of insight, that we are totally immune from all things – totally immune.

The ultimate immunity is self-forgetfulness and the only place for self-forgetfulness is in the moment.

Chapter 22

What Time Is It?

There is always the tendency to *quantify* things. What we are looking for is the *quality* of activities and events, rather than their measurement. Measurement is an aspect of time, and therefore where we're going to. Being isn't going anywhere, merely expressing what is.

So to the question I gave you earlier: if you take away all the clocks and watches and other aspects of measurement, what time is it?

You are being invited to measure that state of non-measurement.

It is the same as thinking or experiencing 'not I', without the terms of measurement you usually use to express 'I'.

Take away all the symbols, pictures, visions, ideas, concepts, numbers and WHAT-IS-THIS? When all that is removed there is precisely what you are – which isn't as you normally like to know yourself.

It is not *who* you are but *what* you are. The 'who' is just opinion, tradition, ideas and old habits which you hold on to in order to confirm your identity. Let go of the idea that 'you' exist and understand there is just existence. Be content and happy to be a 'what' – and don't put a capital 'w' on it!

To be able to reside in that state, without the temptation to project into things, is the nature of meditation and Zen and where you are coming from.

We are looking for the threshold of thinking. You can get a feeling of it within bare attention when seeing becomes looking or hearing becomes listening; the point when you try to establish

yourself in terms of ‘me and it’. Go into the merely organic and chemical activity of thought. That is where Zen exists.

I’m not asking if you understand the words I’m saying, but do you have a response feeling to what is riding on the words? Answers are not required, only an investigation of the question. Relinquish in each moment the words that you use to take you ‘there’, and remain ‘here’. Try to recognize when you translate feeling into verbal thinking and where that verbal response rises by habit, or with a feeling of insecurity.

We’re talking about the need for some external communication to establish identity and ignoring the most important aspect, which is to establish the internal communication of what we truly are, before thinking grabs at it and converts it into forms of measurement and description.

The whole idea of the spiritual life is that everything is expressed, and every journey takes place throughout the whole universe, without leaving the point – because the point is the universe and the universe is the point.

In artistic or calligraphic terms, a line is only a point that is being self-indulgent. Within that moment of self-indulgence the point establishes ego and thinks it’s a thing, but it isn’t. There is only the point – everything which strays from that misses the point in a very profound way.

Try to feel and experience thoughts rising – what is the bridge between one thought and another? What links the moment between waking and sleeping – between breathing in and breathing out – the moment between living and dying – the moment between thoughts and identities rising?

What links them into a chain, and do we need it?

Feel for it.

Try it another way: What is the end of a journey?

Chapter 23

The Light of Mindfulness

Satipatthāna is the training and cultivation of mind and mental states; it gives mental freedom in everyday life by the consideration of what you are doing and why you are doing it; it is ‘being with it’ at the best level of quality and conduct you can manage for yourself within your existing state of maturity and wisdom. Being ‘here and now’ with the knowledge that in this present moment this being is free.

The body is stretched and breathes, finds its point of balance and its place to come from, and reviews itself going into any particular kind of situation. It observes what kind of being is rising in that moment to take part in that action, questions whether it is a selfish, self-conscious, insecure motive or whether it is at ease – finds its answer, and then proceeds with the action. That is the whole of Satipatthāna, that is the whole of the Mindfulness practice which can be activated in any moment in every day of your life.

Nothing complicated – it's not designed for complicated beings – it's very simple. There is no other way, all paths flow into this one.

By considering this way soberly and giving some love and attention to it, there is the possibility that one can regain the dignity, integrity and self-respect of our birth-right that is lost in the distractions and in the wilful conspiracy of old beings.

It is time to grow up. The world is in a state and it needs a few people in a better state to help it through its crisis. Fill your cup and it will overflow. That, as far as I am concerned, is what my life here is about: and why this place has come to be and why so many magical things happen here. It is probably what it has always been for, and has been waiting to be; in the same way it is what you have always been for and what you are waiting to be. What else could you be?

Every activity here is dedicated totally to that moment of mindfulness. With every loving breath of this practice there is a lightness, which is the light of Mindfulness. Not a great flashing beacon, just a glow; and if people just breathe and let something fall from their shoulders as they pass or come in the gate, that is all that is needed.

There is a light from this place, and it's very important at the present time. Every mindful action that you perform feeds that light and also feeds your own light.

Don't be surprised if you suddenly feel a sensation of brightness around – that is one of the manifestations – and in that moment of lightness the conditionings and sufferings of life after life fall away, and there is a moment of freedom.

The energies come down – everything is peaceful – don't start thinking again. In the gaps between the thinking *about* things, there is complete peace and ease; there is dynamic energy, alertness, efficiency and flow. All you have to do is dig your feet into the ground

and hold on with your toes to prevent yourself from floating into space.

If you are feeling good, acknowledge it is because of the practice, and not some surprising accident! We *are* what we practice, and if we are feeling good we have practised it. That is known as taking responsibility for what we are and what we know.

Chapter 24

Body Zones, The Face on the Body & Backward and Forward Circles

In Buddhist and Taoist metaphysics the definition of conception or the beginning of life is: ‘A woman in her time, a man who is able, and that which is to be born’.

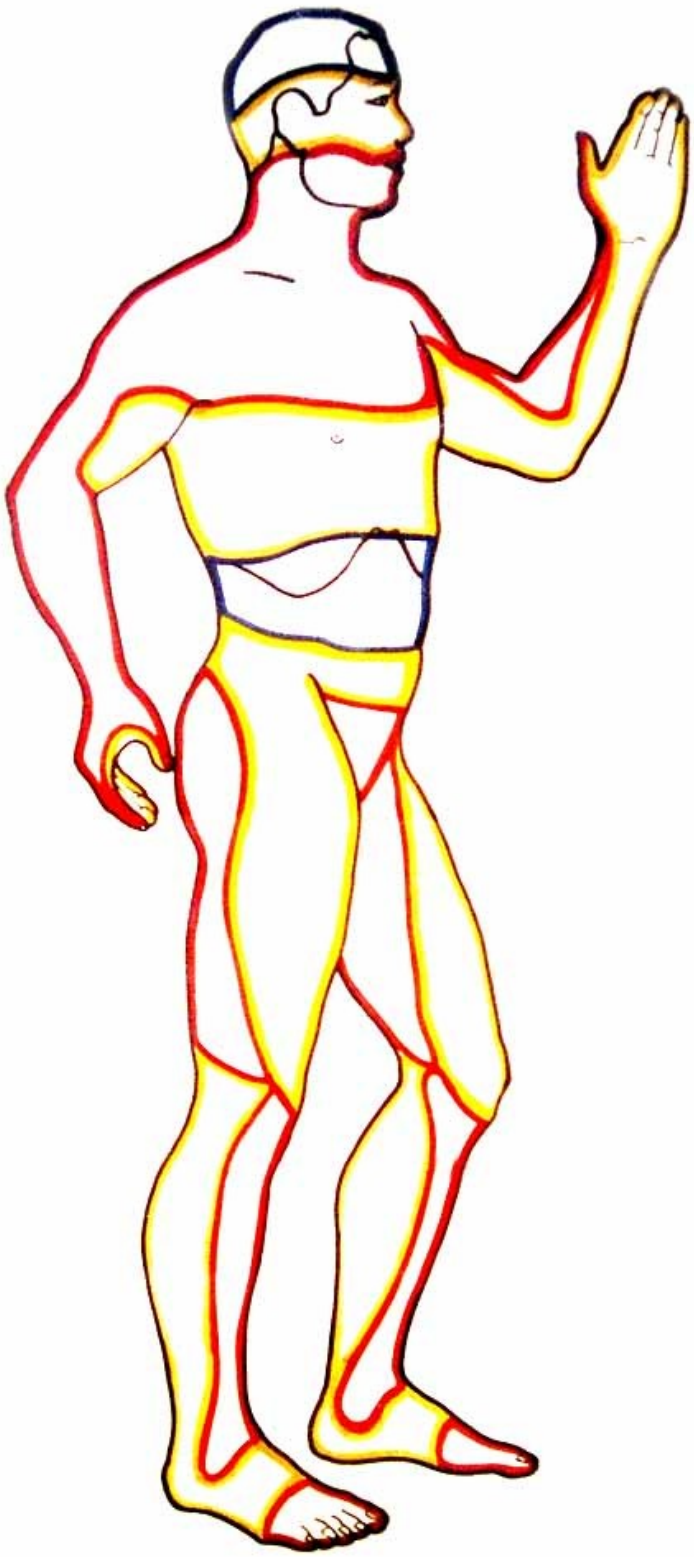
At the point when the male cell enters and mingles with the female they fuse into one and that first single cell contains a nucleus and a point called the centrosome. Under the influence of the need for a physical base through which to experience sensation, an agitation or tension sets up between these two points and causes the cell to split into two thus beginning the organism.

Any basic single cell organism approached by outside stimulus either opens up to take in and enclose, or hardens, vibrates and pushes away. So you have only two movements in the universe: centrifugal and centripetal – one expands, the other contracts; one takes in, the other pushes away – the acquisitive and the averse.

This applies to our multi-cellular organisms (because the multi-cellular organism is made up of millions of reproductions of that first splitting of the single cell), and the chemical characteristics and imprint of that which is to be born, the blue print, is continued in all the cells forming the new organism.

Let’s take the torso of the body as the cell, from the Adam’s apple to the pubic bone and the perineum. There are little blips for the arms and legs, and on top there’s a telephone exchange, which reflects it all. If you kneel with your hands in your lap, it gives you the shape of the cell, the organism.

When something approaches that organism it either opens up to take in, or it hardens and pushes away. There is an outer averse layer which protects and defends, and an internal acquisitive layer which absorbs and processes.



Over the years I have found it helpful to develop this idea, along with the face on the body, and to see connections between tensions arising in different parts of the body and tendencies. The chart shows my findings but it is not a final definitive system – it is an idea for you to explore and develop yourselves.

So, at the top of the cell there is an averse band, measured as you see on the chart. The thumb is at the level of the top of the shoulders and the hand comes down to a point two fingers breadth below the armpit. At the back it is round about the seventh thoracic vertebra and at the front around the third intercostal space, which is the anxiety or asthma point, the vital breathing point. At the lowest level of this band below the armpit, there is an anxiety area – in the middle around the collar bone a fear area, and at the level of the shoulders, an aggression, anger and attack area – what we see when 'the hackles rise'. The averse says: 'I don't want, I can't cope, I don't like': apprehension, anxiety, fear, aggression. This band extends down the outside of the arms and the front of the hands and reappears at the level of the pubic bone region, but we'll get down to that in a minute.

Below that upper averse area, there is the upper acquisitive band, a soft, sustaining and cushioning area. We find our measurement brings the bottom of that band two fingers breadth below the sternum. Then from two fingers breadth below the sternum to two fingers breadth below the navel, is the part we call centre. Within this area is the central cell – the vital centre from which we begin in psychic or vibrational terms – two fingers breadth above the navel and three fingers breadth inside. This is the place of calm and ease before it gets surrounded by layers of the acquisitive, the averse and the confused, which inhibit the emergence of excellence and freedom.

Four fingers breadth only, without the thumb, below centre, is the lower acquisitive area, the intestine, which cushions and sustains the central area in conjunction with the upper acquisitive area. Four fingers breadth below that brings you to the pubic bone, and that is the lower averse area, connecting with the upper averse area through the outside of the arms, hands and fingers. This lower averse area ends at the perineum.

You'll see there's an area of protection on the inner side of the arm, which pulls in and holds to itself, and the lower averse area extends down the back of the legs to the knees and then comes down the shins and into the feet. Tension in the toes in terms of fear or excitement affects the body language and the posture. Down skid row in any big city, the down and outs show tight toes, stiff knees, pelvises tucked back, arms held in and heads down – anxiety, aversion and fear. A hundred yards away in the centre of finance and commerce you find the same clenched hands, stiff shoulders and tight jaw, but with an umbrella, a briefcase and a *Financial Times* under the arm!

Now, the head. Fortunately that has only three parts, otherwise we would be even crazier than we are! Aversion area: 'Don't like, can't cope, don't want', from the bottom of the ear across the upper lip to the bottom of the other ear, including the mouth and jaw and joining the upper averse area at the Adam's apple. From the bottom of the ear up to the eyebrow is the acquisitive area. This includes the senses of hearing, sight, smell and taste in the soft palate. If there is a holding here it will produce catarrh and sinus symptoms, as the acquisitive chest area produces congestive breathing symptoms. In the lower acquisitive area the congestion is constipation. The mid-brain, where all the associative thinking goes on, hoards and holds on to ideas leading to mental and intellectual constipation and rigidity of ideas and attitudes.

The area at the top, the crown, corresponds to the centre area, and is the part that is basically clear.

You'll find the links in terms of the face on the body. The navel equates with the small cleft above the top lip: the breath comes in at the nose (just above the navel) and up into the sinuses (the rib-cage and around the lungs). With your hands on your hips you make the ears from the armpits down the sides of the torso. The eyebrows are the area around the collar-bone, with the eyes roughly around the 4th intercostal – don't equate the nipples with eyeballs because breasts vary. We have had fun on workshops painting faces on bodies, and you can work with the idea yourselves.

You'll see the connections and some of the illnesses and afflictions which come from different kinds of tension. Everybody has certain characteristics which show them to be primarily oriented towards anxiety, fear and aggression or towards hoarding and not letting go.

The positive side of the averse characteristic is that which inquires, perceives, analyses, understands and protects without being either defensive or aggressive, whereas the acquisitive absorbs that which is beneficial, processes it and lets it go – it only become averse when something it possesses tries to get away. The averse characteristic tends to keep itself much smaller, and its possessions are not inside but 'out there'; it only becomes acquisitive when something it owns out there, which perhaps it never uses and doesn't let come close, tries to get away.

Finally there is that aspect in the human organism brought about by memory and speech – confusion – deludedness – not seeing things as they truly are – believing things to be other than they are, and stubbornly defending the delusion. Confusion affects centre but is invariably shown in the joints, where points meet and there is a pull from either an acquisitive or an averse area on either side. The joint

itself is the confusion about identity, which shows itself in the way people walk. Where you have two counter negative pulls, or a negative and a positive pull, the body will be unbalanced and walk unsteadily. Crystalline deposits will form in knees and fingers causing arthritis and rheumatism because the body has excess toxicity.

One other important matter. You remember we talked about the first agitation of the single cell – if we take this cell here, that agitation starts at the perineum and goes up the centre of the body to the throat and soft palate. That is the central area of tension in the body, which also splits it into two aspects, left and right, male and female, yin-yang, intuition-intellect, whatever you want to call it.

How are those two points affected by forward and backward circles? You should be able to feel them. Try a backward circle in the area just at the back of where you swallow and feel it open; likewise put the attention just in from the anus, and do a backward circle and a forward circle on it. Do you feel the effects in the muscles in the cheeks, below the eye and in the jaw? Feel the interaction between those two places, and for what actions and activities they influence.

Whenever you do an exercise look at what is happening in those two areas. Remember that when energy is not totally at centre, it is in the area of the averse or the acquisitive and becomes negative. When you release the tension from those two places, the energy floods back to centre, and becomes positive.

At one level these two areas represent what you take into the body, and what you let out. At another level the throat represents intellectual status, expressing itself in speech, breath, facial expression and gestures and the other end represents sexual status and shows in the posture. The whole axis is related to our two main forms of identity. If everything is happening from centre there's immediacy, and a sensuality of contact with any object without ego rising between the two. There are two principal barriers to that

immediacy: one is intellect spurred on by the emotions, and the other is sexuality spurred on by the emotions. The emotions of course are the ego factor.

As I said the other night, no matter whether you're cooking, writing a letter, driving a car, engaging in sexual activity or conversation, a backward circle and the out-breath with enrich it, and bring you to stability. It will take the bugs out of the system.

Chapter 25

Healing – Attitudes and Methods

If we look at the essence of universal nature we will find that there are four basic potentials – of solidity, fluidity, temperature and motion. When these potentials project themselves into matter they become earth and water and fire and air. In some combination these four elements are the fundamental constituents of everything in the universe. This means that the organism we call ‘Myself’, the spaces within the organism, the space outside the organism, the trees, the carpets, the floors, and the ceilings are all different expressions of these basic elements and are all different phases of movement and activity.

The natural state of any organism is one that is continually in change. However, due to the characteristic of human nature which has ideas of permanence, there is a tendency either to try to slow down or inhibit that flow, or to try and speed it up. If there is attack by a virus or an injury to the organism, human nature adopts the attitude ‘I am – ill, in pain, diseased or unhappy’.

If the intake of air and the freedom of movement are inhibited in some way then *the natural state of change* which would, if it was permitted, wash out and adjust this imbalance, is inhibited. This natural process of change is the healing process: that which allows things to fall away, which rebuilds and transforms. This is not to say that diseases and conditions which assault the organism do not exist, but that the healing process is inhibited by the attitude of possession or rejection of these conditions.

Let us look for a moment at the idea ‘I have a cold’. This fact is, of itself, neither positive nor negative and is neither relevant nor up to date – what we should look for is how ‘I’ am dealing with the cold.

Some people possess colds by going to bed and pulling the clothes over their heads. Others reject them by pushing drugs into their bodies and getting very tense.

It’s exactly the same as the river. If you dam the river, there’s a build-up and it overflows, and if you push the river, it flows back on you. Either way you are swamped, over-run by the thing that you’ve created.

If, instead, we observe in each moment what arises, then there is no such thing as ‘I have a cold’. There is only a rising or running away of heat, an excess or absence of fluidity, vibratory movement and some manifestation of extension or solidity. If these ‘packages’ are changing in every moment, you can’t have the same being having the same cold in any consecutive moment. The being who starts to sneeze is not the same one at the end. There is a change – it’s not even the same cold. In one moment there is heat rising which produces hallucinations, the next moment there is excess fluid which completely stops all thought.

If I grab at it, I will say: ‘I have a cold’. If I want to be accurate, and I want to be free, I will say: ‘There is water throwing out; there is heat; there is sensation; there is movement’. In that, there is no ‘I have’, there is no ‘Me’ having anything; there is no relationship of possessing or rejecting. In that moment there can be freedom.

Whatever happens in any given moment is a combination of past conditionings and present circumstances. The response to, and the identification of that arising, produce some volition – Kamma – for the future. Let us take the example of a man who is sleeping under a tree. The wind stirs a little, a branch vibrates, and an apple falls and hits him on the head. He opens his eyes and looks at the apple. He can do

one of three things. He can pick up the apple, look at it, polish it and eat it. In that, the whole process has been noted, accepted, digested, processed and thrown out. Secondly, he can rub his head, pick up the apple and with a burst of aversion throw it away, because 'that apple fell and hurt me'. Lastly, he can merely note that an apple has fallen from the tree, leave it there and go back into the non-registering state.

That happens in every moment of our life. The potential state of sleeping is the sub-stream from which phenomena arise – it's called Bhavanga – a Pali word meaning 'the undercurrent forming the condition of being' (Nyanatiloka) – the perpetual dream from which things arise, like fish nibbling at the bait.

For the first eight stages of one moment of consciousness nothing happens – there is the existence of a tree, the wind vibrating, the apple falling and hitting the head, the waking up, registering pressure on the head and an apple on the ground.

Then comes the identification. 'What do I want to do about this apple?' With that, all past identifications come up, which are conditioned and may produce further changes of emotion in relation to the apple. The moment we do something about it, there is volition. So, from being conditioned by the past, we then condition the future, in the relationship we have with what has happened in that moment.

Whatever arises in any given moment is conditioned. We don't have to reject anything, we don't have to possess anything, we merely have to observe the nature of what arises in any moment. Feeling the change of chemistry in the body produces a response. With the response comes an opinion, and with the opinion there comes a mental state producing an act which registers something for the future.

Next time we see someone who 'has a cold' it may be revealing to examine our assumption in the light of the changing ration of

air/earth/fire/water. We may well find that there is a change in chemistry arising from some emotional experience; a manifestation of heat energy; a response to past conditionings in the present moment in changing patterns of solidity, fluidity, temperature and motion – nothing else. What we must look for, particularly in the field of diagnosis and healing, is not what happens to a person, but their response to it. In the response to phenomena is the quality of the being in that moment.

It is the *attitude* to dis-ease, to health and to healing which has to be investigated. First there is the idea that we exist in a continuing and unchanging way. Secondly there is the status and identity that we give to illness or forms of pain. Certain words have emotional values – 'extraction', 'poultice', 'abortion', 'cancer', 'insanity'. In response to these words the organism becomes tense and either grabs at the condition or pushes it away – thereby identifying it or identifying with it. We say: 'I have it', 'it' has come back, 'my' pain, 'my' back, etc. We take little account of the lifestyle and the attitudes, which have produced the condition. So often we rush to the expert and demand to be cured – provided that we don't actually have to change anything in order to effect the cure.

We are responsible for what occurs in us and what 'happens' to us. In each moment of our lives we choose to accept what arrives or to reject it – to let it be or to take stands and attitudes in relationship to it. We get exactly what we deserve and what we have created for ourselves – a hard lesson and a true one. It is the process of coming to that awareness and the freedom which that knowledge facilitates within us which is the nature and the function of healing.

A removal of symptoms is not a cure. True healing always does two things: it recognizes the characteristic of the 'patient' which has produced the 'condition' and it alleviates the symptoms of that condition; then, most importantly, it gives advice, education and

support to the patient to help him or her change the attitude and the activity in daily life which produce the condition. So the condition does not recur, or if it does a greater level of compassion and skill will be available within the patient to deal with it. Healing deals, above all, with responsibility and maturity.

In older cultures healing is regarded as a developed attribute – something quite natural which arises at a particular level of development as the fruit of love and generosity. Make no mistake, love and generosity are not abstract pseudo-religious terms, they are physiological facts – ways of describing an energy that is free-flowing and in harmony with its environment. In a sense method is unimportant – it may be herbs, puncture with needles, laying on of hands, transference of energy across distances, breath, exercises, the use of particular sounds or colours. The basis is what matters and if the method works, the basis will be the same. This is not to negate the astounding advances and skills of modern medical practice and the wisdom and compassion of many medical practitioners. It is not to negate the wise use of drugs, or surgery or physiotherapy; it is only to say that if these methods are applied unmindfully, and without awareness of the nature of the patient, the cause of the condition and the responses of the whole organism, then they can be dangerous and will not lead to health. Not being ill is not the same as being in good health. There are many levels of awareness and there are many levels of health.

Healing is principally awareness – of knowing how easily the organism is manipulated and chemically changed by emotional ideas, opinions, memories and patterns of response – the recognition that the more we allow ourselves to be manipulated the more we will throw ourselves off balance, upset the natural rhythm of things with our tension and produce dis-ease. It is understanding the nature of thought and knowing the more we can let go of our negative habits

the more we will restore ourselves to the flow of change that is health. This is self-healing.

A healer is someone who with skill (by practice of centring and awareness) has attained, either permanently or at ‘special’ moments, a state of free-flowing energy which by contact ‘triggers off’ the same free flow in the patient. The healer provides the basic tools, the education and the reminder – the patient co-operates with the natural law of things to do the rest.

Meditation is a life practice, a practice of skill for each moment, for each breath, and is the very foundation of health and happiness. The only limits are in lack of awareness and skill – lack of personal magic – lack of complete control over the elements in the organism. Maybe we are not able to dissolve and let go of a brain tumour or a cancer of the stomach, but it is not unreasonable to believe we can dissolve a common cold, a headache or a stomach-ache – release ourselves from a virus, or heal some part of the body which has been cut or bruised – just by putting our concentrated attention into the middle of the dis-ease.

The meditator who is aware of the body, and who imposes no limit upon what his meditation, his awareness and his understanding of the nature of the complete and integrated organism can be, will not hold on to or get into combat with situations or things we call disease – even psychotic revolution within the organism known as cancer. If we enter into combat with that revolutionary community, it will become stronger. If there is loving kindness, peace and tranquillity directed towards the cells within that community then there is every chance that the community will dissolve and be re-accepted into the society against which it revolted. Thus, in certain Oriental hospitals, and gradually in the West, time is being set aside for relaxation, for meditation and for healers of various religious methods to visit. The

results are quite marked. It is a matter of confidence and spiritual competence.

We are faced with ignorance and a massive lack of confidence. If we are to develop the potential and the skills of healing, then the abilities and the extension of the being to explore all its possibilities must be brought to fullness. There must be a skilful wisdom, based not in comparisons of one person with another, but in understanding the world and human nature, in the light of one's own investigation and in knowledge of the organism that we call 'myself'. A healing method must not only relieve stress, it must point out the practical ways of adjusting the patient's opinion of the environment to a more loving and wise one. Any method of instruction must have been personally experienced by the person who recommends it. A healer must be centred and at ease in order to heal.

A true healing method must take account of the history, conditioning and present environment of the being and not seek to impose any ideal, other than that of balance, harmony and happiness: there must be no dogmatic belief or measurement of what constitutes that integration – the only yard-stick is that the being achieves its own potential in this lifetime.

Initially people start off with a natural feeling of sympathy, a thought 'I wish you well', 'I hope they get better'. When people go into hospital or are in an immense amount of distress, we feel it quite natural and normal to say: 'I am thinking of you'. The person concerned invariably accepts quite naturally and normally that there are feelings coming to them which are of value and help.

When we get out of extreme situations which confront us with the ultimate truth we tend to forget these ways of communication. We slip back into the old habits of thinking and believe it doesn't really happen – this is our problem. If we are on a raft that is slowly sinking with sharks milling around, then we are going to have a very swift re-

adjustment of our ideas about the nature of positive thinking or of prayer, and we will indulge in both to our utmost. But if we are standing at a bus stop and there is no bus coming, we don't think of using exactly the same sort of powers. We don't think of using our intuition to get us through a traffic jam, being guided down a new street and taking a different route.

If we have the right sort of temperament and the right sort of chemistry, we begin to get quite overwhelming feelings about the nature of people's thoughts, or the nature of a body with which we are in contact: the hands go out and we put them on a place that is painful and the person that we have touched says: 'Oh, the pain's gone'. At the beginning, we may think it's a coincidence whilst secretly hoping we've done something. There are many attitudes and opinions, depending on our conditioning and environment. We may feel safer merely sitting and transmitting loving energy to someone and won't want to call it healing because of taboos against certain words and activities. If we have been brought up in a community which believes in prayer and its helping or healing value, then we won't feel self-conscious about it. If we have been forced to pray or have these ideas then maybe we will have a reaction against it. There are certain religions which allow praying, but not laying on of hands or manipulation of any kind. It may be that the idea is that this belongs to priesthood – to someone who is 'qualified'. On the other hand they may be regarded as works of the devil.

If we have this sort of chemistry, this open mind and slightly expanded consciousness, then we will either feel conviction (which we practise) or guilt (which we try to keep to ourself). We will feel compelled to use this energy. Once we really open to it and start contacting people with our hands, then we will get patterns and pictures in our mind (sometimes symbols or colours). We may have a concept of a particular organ or part of the body covered in a grey

mist. We will mentally, or physically, try and take that mist away and when we see that organ pink and glowing, the energy flows. Finally we get the feeling that the hand is going right in and plucking something out – or we see a pain and disperse it. This is a chemistry that we are producing by mind power: and the more calm we are the more our own chemistry is likely to influence another's.

We will accept varying degrees of responsibility for our own mind power and will explain what is happening in different ways. We may believe that it is the power of some superior being which is working through us, or that there are particular entities which take over the body and perform acts of healing (because they are qualified and we are not) and we put the responsibility in them. They are all devices to allow us to get this ego and our conditionings and taboos out of the way; to allow the energy to flow, to lose the edges, so that the chemistries may mingle and be transmitted over varying distances.

Recently in a group, people found that for the first time they could *feel* energy, could take an imaginary 'ball' of energy and put it on to someone and that person felt better. A device if you like. You can call it a force field if you wish. Any concept you like. *This very body that we inhabit is itself a concept. It is itself a fantasy, a device, for this trapped mentality to work within.* Every being is a force field. A trapped, limited consciousness, which is not aware that its consciousness is universal and flowing, in and between each of us. It is merely a matter of elements being 'stacked' in different ways. So they are all devices, they are all concepts – the healer and the healed; the idea of healing and the idea of energy.

What matters is that we increasingly try to practise the method which leads us to clarity and non-selfness. We can accept that the philosophy is right; we can accept, when it happens, that it works – the rest is a matter of practice. It is also a matter of whether our

clinging to and craving for particular types of sensation are things that we really want to let go of. We may pay lip service to it and like the occasional moments of peace which it produces (again structured to our requirements), but, since we are geared to sensations (to wants and not wants) which form our opinions and securities in the world, the feeling, the idea, of being without these structures and sensations, is intellectually unthinkable. In terms of the patterns of tension which form our geography of being, this makes us feel uncomfortable. So, the onslaught of freedom is something which is at once terrifying to the intellect and uncomfortable to the body and we just have to get used to it. It's only when we find that it works and that we can move through our world with greater ease, greater peace, greater clarity and a richer sensation than the gross sensations that we have come to believe are our nature, that we will begin to seek the skills which will allow us to expand without fear into a greater consciousness and to a totally different level of being.

This can't be forced. It can't be pushed. It can't be negotiated. It can't be used and it can't be claimed by an ego.

It can only be experienced by a lessening ego, which has less requirements and less rejections in the world. *It's more and more of less and less.*

Above all things it must be natural and it must be accepted as what is wanted. We can't do these things from status or vanity and we can't gain them from power. We can use them *for* power, most certainly we can, but ultimately it will flow back on us, to our cost, if we misuse these things.

We are extremely low on the practice of life skills. We practise every other skill in the world in order to increase our status and our proficiency. The only skill we don't practice is the skill of living. This organism is the main thing about which our knowledge is abysmal. We will learn about a car, we will learn about cookery, we will learn a

little bit about electricity so that we can change a fuse, but God help us if one of *our* fuses blows – we don't know what to do with it. We don't even know when it's blown. We say: 'It did it to me'. This is our nature. We are utterly unknowing, manipulated zombies for most of our life.

The glimpse of freedom from these identity-sensations throws us into a panic and fear that this ego we're so fond of might die. If we can but allow it to go for one moment, we will find an incredible freedom and clarity – a greater peace than we have ever imagined.

Strangest of all things – we do not disappear in a puff of blue smoke. The fear that we will fall down in a heap and be no more – this is the fear of freedom. The fear of death. The fear of truth suddenly thrust upon us. This is the thing we are continually pushing away, because it is our nature. We have practised this nature for twenty million years, since we crawled out of the slime mould.

Chapter 26

Where You Are Coming From & The Unimpressed

The only reason for any kind of spiritual practice is to improve the quality of life. That practice can bring the life-style, the policy, and the level of maturity of views and actions up to date so they are relevant to where you are now.

It can help you find the sanctity of the moment, so that your actions are performed from a place of ease. Then anything arising from those actions in the future will have the same quality.

This practice is based upon taking responsibility and being grateful for everything that has brought you to this present moment, no matter what your opinions about it may be. Then the joy of being in the moment takes you into the future.

You have only one thing to think of in every department of your life – now, and where you are coming from. The moment you start thinking about end points you have many things to think of, and each will fight the other for attention.

‘Where am I coming from?’ ‘What is the quality of what’s happening now?’ Within that there is the certainty and maturity of being which isn’t thrown by anything because it doesn’t have anything to prove and isn’t reliant on external things for its identity.

Never feel anxiety because life appears to be easy: it is meant to be that way although myths and traditions will have you believe otherwise.

Life is flowing – all you can do is get in the way of it.

You are free – all you can do is put yourself in chains.

There is certainty – all you can do is question and introduce anxiety into it, because of needs for achieving and reaching end points.

There is total security within this being, and it needs no confirmation from any exterior object, event or person. That is the law which governs the way life flows.

As I have said many times before, you have either to be totally impressed by the mystery and the magic in everything – from the miracles of the universe to the mess in the bottom of the parrot's cage – or totally unimpressed. Unimpressed by all the adjectives, opinions and ideas.

Just the simple formulas working out in everything – the miracles and disasters, the loves and hates, the obscenities and beauties.

Be totally impressed or totally unimpressed. *At your peril mix the two*, because then you get into comparison and duality. The easier way is the unimpressed because it is less likely to get you involved in ego concepts of perfections.

It is the same with an expression of joy – if you can contain the external expression of it, the need to share it, and just let it be within you and then overflow, that is a greater and a better sharing. It doesn't demand anything from the projection, nor does it attract misinterpretation of that projection, which is often a problem. That also comes under the area of being unimpressed – just permitting the joy to rise – and containing it. It then expresses itself in a totally different impersonal way without taking you with it. The more one expresses joy through the ego or in a projected sort of way, the more it leaves you open to all sorts of reactions in the world by people who want either to possess it or to attack or destroy it.

To be unimpressed is particularly the way of loving-kindness, compassion and humour.

Loving-kindness rises, fill the cup and overflows.

Compassion understands at a deep level that it is not the being that is suffering but the suffering that suffers. It is able to remain unmoved whilst weeping in empathy with the being that is suffering.

At mundane levels it may seem scathing and debunking but human nature uses these attitudes to avoid the essential truths of its being.

The truth is that it is alone, and does not exist as it believes it exists. Everything that human nature is trying to get rid of it has never had, so trying to get rid of it is a pretension and a delusion. How ridiculous to engage in all kinds of ploys to protect and hold on to something that you have never had or been.

If that is not an occasion for loving kindness, compassion and humour, I don’t know what is.

Chapter 27

Tendencies and Characteristics

Tendencies are our mannerisms and personality traits, the games and manipulations we use to gain security of identity from external things. Characteristics on the other hand are not dependent upon objects, events and people for identity but flow through them, keeping a clarity and certainty in their sense of being. One who has let go of personality has a very clear characteristic, in terms of where they’re coming from, without the weaknesses and needs of the dependency on external things.

It’s more and more of less and less. Having explored the extremes of sensuality and asceticism, one comes to a quiet point at

the middle, and rests there. One gradually withdraws from objects, events and people, and the doing and the thinking; one withdraws and lets go of the sensations, and suddenly experiences the greater clarity and true sensuality of being in the moment.

There's a sense of being which is moving, and knows that whilst it is arbitrarily called 'me', 'my organism', it is changing so rapidly that it can't justify grabbing at things and saying 'this is me, this is mine', or making judgements and being possessive or averse, all of which cause suffering. There is a flowing characteristic which is ever-changing. Only when an aggravation of ego identity arises does a whirlpool appear in the river. Once that selfness is let go, then the vortex clears and the river continues to flow.

What is that vortex? Water swirling around nothing. In reality nothing. There's no substance – only an idea, an aggravation, a sore thumb sticking up in the universe. When that agitation and neediness subside the water flows, which is its true nature and characteristic.

We are attracted, even mesmerized by the things we are allergic to, whether an internal state or an external object or event. But if it were not for our essential nature which is basically pure, there would never be any discontent with the impurities which seek sensation and bring us to birth. If there is a tendency of a negative kind there will be a pure version of it, and an urge in terms of progress to let go of the negative aspect, so that the purity can express itself fully in the world. That is what nudges us and leads us to seek knowledge and to find teachers, so we can learn the way to let go of these tendencies.

Depending on everything that has gone before, we are born into certain circumstances and situations by attraction – selecting and homing in on a particular chemistry of the body which already has its package of the acquisitive, the averse and the confused. That puts us in a particular environment at a particular time, with a particular set of conditions and tendencies, which permit certain things to happen

to us. If we're looking for the psychology of any individual, let us look at the state in which the previous being died. If there is a being that is angry about dying, then there will be a being entering the world in a similarly angry state. The laws are very, very just.

I know it is a difficult proposition to accept and it's not that one blames people for what happens to them or that one is without compassion. Nevertheless, within the course of spiritual development, everyone must take total responsibility for what they do, and what has brought them into that particular situation. You can't blame it on anything else, because everyone reacts in a different way to the same stimulus.

Sensation coming from a direction you like is pleasure. Sensation coming from a direction that you don't like you call pain. Same sensation. Pain is a combination of sensation and opinion. If we get identity out of pain, and also get a sensation of identity out of blame, then we have a nice little system going. 'The world doesn't understand me, it does things to me, and it gives me pain.' This provides us with a nice broad base for manipulating the world, and also permits us to continue as we are; because of course it's not us that's to blame, it's the world that's doing it to us.

There are all manner of actions performed towards people in the course of their life, some of which are regarded by society as being more serious than others, but that doesn't regulate the kind of reaction there is. Some people will respond to something which society regards as horrifying in an easy way, and will react in a horrified way to something which other societies would regard as quite small and petty. That is why it is incumbent on each person to be responsible for their *reactions*, because no matter how hard they try they can't change the activities in the world. They *can* change their reactions, and therein lies their salvation.

You form the world; the world exists by your opinion of it.

You say surely children cannot be held responsible when they are at the mercy of a stronger adult. But what is a child? A highly experienced and deeply conditioned organism which happens recently to have been born into a body in this particular phase of its development through many lives. You can't say it's inexperienced – it's had vast experience. It only happens to be a child because it's small in stature, and has a comparatively limited vocabulary; all the rest of the mechanisms are there. Which is why we invariably fail to see the childishness of some adults and the wisdom of some small children.

We can agree totally on the difficulty; it is alien to our views of the world, which come within the range of deludedness, in the sense of not seeing things as they truly are.

The more you complain about the world and what the world is like, the more you're really saying: 'I wish I were God, I would do something about this'.

Chapter 28

Reactions and Responsibility

People who cause you trouble in the world – and that includes your children – are your old beings manifesting – otherwise how would you identify them? The more uncomfortably like you those old beings or children are, the more defensive you get, and insist that they be other than you are. They present a reflection of yourself which is not the one you want to see.

If you change where you are coming from, your children, and other people, will change where they are going to.

A quite petty or innocuous event often triggers off a whole package of emotional conditionings causing a reaction based on a combination of opinion, sensation and the relationship of present circumstances and past conditionings, which is wildly above what is necessary for that moment.

Opinions are based upon preferences, survival, and the way we like to have our identity confirmed – whether it gives us power, status, affection, profit or sensations which might be called sexual or erotic. Each of us has our own speciality and ulterior motive to steer every encounter, relationship or conversation to the point where we will have our identity confirmed in the way we like best.

If you are dependent upon objects, events and people for your identity, then you can't blame the objects, events and people for not behaving as you want, because you are creating the situation. You can't manipulate your projections of the world to reflect something which you are not.

'Be as I want you to be, so that the reflection I see satisfies me, and I get identity from it.'

‘You must be good children’ – ‘You must be a good dog’ – ‘This must be a good event’ –‘Behave in the way I want you to, because that defines me’.

Tough, yes, sure it’s tough. We rush screaming from that proposition, but it remains startlingly true.

It is the same when old beings rise and cause you to behave in ways that you do not want to behave: when children in you arise to deal with your own children, and the children learn from it. People must respond to you because of your quality and your self-centredness and non-dependence upon them for identity.

There is always the demand from other people – children, parents, lovers, friends – that we come up to date, and if someone is continually attacking or challenging you, it might be useful to listen to what it is they’re asking you to do. It might be to grow up – to come up to date – to actually be who you say you are rather than insisting that they do it so you can take the kudos from the reflection.

Whatever you approve or disapprove of in the world, nothing happens until you react to it from the stance, opinion or attitude which is your practised being. If you react in a different way, there is a different happening.

You are responsible for your reactions, and if you have a reaction from essence, from clear knowing and understanding, in that moment the world is different.

You can’t blame your reaction on the world and you certainly can’t blame the world for the action, because it’s probably reacting to something else anyway. At that level *you* are always in control, and in every moment you are the creator of, and responsible for, whatever world you find yourself in. If you see acts of aggression in the world, on the television or in the paper, and don’t feel responsible for having entered into the conspiracy of that aggression, then you are living in cloud cuckoo land. All the aggression you see in the world and are

shocked by has arisen from every aggressive cell in your body – form every twitch of the clenched fist – from the rising anger, the indignation, the self-pity and the accusation.

You alone are responsible.

If you wish to change your world, change who you are through this practice, which can transform you in a moment.

Don’t blame, there’s no such thing as blame. There’s no such thing as praise. There is responsibility, and that’s what produces your reaction.

We are all in the conspiracy of helping to bolster up each other’s avoidance of being alone, and dependency on objects, events and people. At some point we have to break it and say: ‘In this moment, I am free of that system. I am totally responsible for my reactions, and will gradually learn how to change them, and replace unwholesome with wholesome, unsuccessful with successful, anger with knowing and calm.’

If the world isn’t as you like it, take responsibility for it and change it.

It only exists in your reactions and opinions.

Chapter 29

Humour

We are talking about the absurd – the different reality that comes with the divine fool, the Zen master or the clown. They all hold a mirror up to the world so that it sees itself in a different light.

The moment Zen reality emerges everything is turned on its ear; we see that what is usually regarded as normal and real, is no such thing, and what has previously been regarded as nonsense is much more true and valid.

At this point we have to learn to live with that double reality – contributing to some of the rituals of the psychosis of the normal, from our own point of madness, and yet completely content within it (which is a very good description of Zen).

Some of the greatest jokes and clown routines in the world are based upon the comedian or clown showing you what he's about to do, moving towards it, doing it, and then pointing out the fact that he's done it. It is always to do with someone being left in an inferior position, or us feeling in a superior position, or having a nervous relief that something has happened to somebody else and has not happened to us.

Some of the cruellest things come out in jokes and everyone rolls around the aisles laughing. It all depends on the context and the way we look at things. A few years ago there was a man in France who gave a lift to two girl hitchhikers. He'd been driving for quite a long time and decided he needed to stop to relieve himself, so he pulled into the side of the road where there was a small wall. He said: 'I'll be back in a few moments', rested a hand on the wall, and jumped over – and fell seventy feet! That's not funny, he hurt himself! Why are you all laughing? It was the longest recorded pee in history.

Then there is the absurd and how words can be misinterpreted to someone's disadvantage. A policeman rushes up, shouts in the cab window: 'Follow that car'; so the cab goes off and leaves the policeman standing there. Now that's very serious, a criminal has escaped and you think it's funny – that's just antisocial.

Sometimes you get a juxtaposition of analogies – two people on a tandem, breathing heavily, climbing up a hill, very slowly, one body pressed against the other, and a dog comes up and throws a bucket of water over them.

They are all examples of the ludicrous or the ridiculous in human behaviour. The way people do things to themselves and yet blame other people and things and refuse to accept responsibility.

To what level are you able to maintain that sense of the absurd or the ludicrous? At what point does something which, in one situation you would regard as a joke become something you are totally overtaken by, and deadly serious? At what point does that humour desert you and what is the reason for it? Something happens and we are overtaken, then later we look back and see the humour of the situation and realize how seriously we have taken it. The point at which we are overtaken is the point where we don't take responsibility for our conditionings and lay it on someone else.

Quite often there are occasions when we don't observe we have been taken over by a ridiculous old pattern, and are behaving in a totally out of date and childish way; only later do we realize and laugh at ourselves. There are some areas of our life, however, to which we're so dedicated that we never accept our childishness in them – we continually rationalize and make them respectable and seek to justify them. We have to see the humour, the ridiculousness in these situations.

Often the absurdity and self-consciousness of people in situations which are quite serious and grave are pointed back to us by

the clown, the cartoon caricature, the mime artist or the satirist. Sometimes it is very obvious how we have behaved in a situation and our reaction to it. When we see it clearly it can provoke anything from a good humoured laugh to a reluctant smile to show we are knowledgeable about ourselves.

One of the major factors is whether good will and compassion are present. If in any situation, whether serious or humorous, we can observe from our own experience and knowledge with a sympathetic, empathetic feeling then there is compassion, and true good humour can emerge: sentimentality and feelings of superiority are not present. We can laugh at the absurdity of someone else's behaviour even though it may have terrible consequences for them, because we have dealt with it at a personal level. We can smile at someone else's absurdity, having fully accepted the absurdities within ourself, and also feel quite moist-eyed about someone else's sorrow having already handled a similar kind of sorrow. We can maybe even help them by bringing a little compassionate humour into the situation to show them how they're behaving.

Compassion is the secret – humour without compassion is cruelty – in a sense being blind. It is also sometimes a protection: it enables us to be safe within a dangerous situation such as conflict or war. Jokes are substituted for words and phrases which are frightening or terrifying. We can deprive another human being of life by giving him a derogatory name. This ignores his humanness so we can do something to him which, if we fully recognized that he was human, we would not be able to do: we give our enemies special kinds of names, which have a less than equal or human context, to permit us to do things to them, which are cruel, primitive and obscene.

Laughter can arise in a hysterical way, enabling us to cry out our sorrows and terrors in a respectable and unrevealing way, but the face that is laughing in that context is showing exactly the same facial

expression as someone exhibiting a very deep sorrow or fear. Turn the sound down on the television and then look at the facial expressions and many times you can't tell if a person is laughing or crying until you get the sound and the background music which tell you.

A child, when it is laughing and giggling, is having direct sensations of pleasure, and that directness without any intervening opinion or conditioning gives a feeling of joy arising. Later on things filter in and there are conditioned reflexes which change the sound.

We have different kinds of social laughs which produce different kinds of messages. As I was saying earlier one of the most joyful sounds is within a group of people who are meditating, and perhaps have been meditating for quite a while. Suddenly there's a laugh or a giggle, possibly even from the teacher, and it spreads through the group, and suddenly everybody is sitting there laughing while meditating, and the sound is completely free coming right from the belly. Those things are very, very rare because they're not covered with the veneers of needing to disguise what we're feeling. The spontaneous laugh of the child is fine, and it's also very close to tears; those things are always very close together, because both laughter and tears are a negotiation between an in-breath and an out-breath, between a letting-go and a hanging-on; without that juxtaposition there can be no such thing as humour.

Sometimes laughter is a device to let go an out-breath, to release tension, which can be pleasurable. Other people, not so successfully, use shouting and anger in the same way. In the final analysis we're all looking for a device of some kind to let go of all the ghosts of the past and all the omens of the future and all the oughts and shoulds and just come into the present moment – with a great sigh of contentment.

We do many things in our life in order to end up at that out-breath – the length of time it takes us to realize that all we have to do

is breathe out, rather than go through all the negotiations in order to get there, is the length of time we take to accepting our total freedom in any situation.

Having said that it's still a better choice to laugh rather than to cry, but it uses the same muscles. It's the same place, the solar plexus; you can either grab and hold there, or you can just tickle and let go. There are two areas of tension, the throat and the perineum, and when they are released there is either laughter or orgasm. The whole point is that with the out-breath we come into the moment.

If we find laughter is being continually used as a device, then we have to listen to the sound and see what posture, gesture and facial expression are involved to find out what we're actually doing, and whether all we have to do is just smile and nod, to express as much understanding, compassion, joy and pleasure. Don't be self-critical about it, just look at the methods as part of the normal process of self-investigation. Things that start out as spontaneous end up as automatic, and that's when the danger creeps in: things slip into being a habit because we find it's well-received and it works. That can be said just as much for a tantrum we've always used, as for laughter that delighted our parents and drives everybody crazy in the office, because it has become constricted and is demonstrating something.

On the other hand, good humour is a readiness for fellowship, a way to relax the jaw and the body, and to permit loving feelings out into the world to create a pleasant atmosphere. Within that there are little triggers which are familiar patterns, and obviously there are just as many games as there are with anything else. Our temperament will show in the kind of things we laugh at, either a little too readily or a little too loudly and, provided we are watching, that is fine also. Some people only laugh uproariously when there's anything to do with toilets. Some only if there is a disaster factor, something horrifying happening to somebody, and yet others need something which

permits them to let go of their sexual embarrassment – all different triggers and all masks. What we are always wanting to do, is to let go of all our prejudices and conditionings and relate to the moment with a feeling of good humour and fellowship. Certain forms of humour, provided they have the aspect of compassion in them, permit us to share that good feeling; when that's pure it's a delight, but that doesn't happen all that often.

You could write a whole book on the gaffs and the stupid, nonsensical, totally inappropriate things people say, searching for an identity of behaviour, at funerals or at weddings – the death embarrassment and the sex embarrassment.

Some of the funniest, sickest jokes that I have ever heard have been told to me by the subject of those sick jokes. If somebody else told me this story about a spastic I wouldn't find it particularly funny.

Now – watch your reactions, the chemical reactions of embarrassment or apprehension that may or may not be in good taste. As I say: 'I am going to tell you a joke that a spastic told me', what are your reactions? Feel them, watch the changes of elements, watch yourself preparing a persona, a set of muscles, facial expressions, watching the laughter level so that you can react and control it, in exactly the right way depending on the kind of status you wish to get out of this situation. Are you sitting comfortably?

I don't think I want to hear this story.

No, but why? What do you think it might do to you?

I could feel it in the jaws, there was tightening. I feel what a nerve the spastic has got to tell a joke about spastics. Who does he think he is?

Yes, but if a spastic is telling a joke about spastics, the joke is told with total compassion and understanding, from right within the

situation. It's an invitation to you to lose your embarrassment and accept them as total human beings, which is why they tell the story.

There was a spastic who was in therapy to try and let go the muscles, so that the unruly body could be controlled. The therapist says: 'Right, now if you can bring your two hands together like that, touching, I'll give you an ice-cream cornet as a reward.' So with great difficulty the hands came together – and missed. Breathe – try to control the arm shooting off all over the place – (and don't forget this story is being told by a spastic who was already jumping about because he was getting so excited with the story) – eventually, he gets his hands together, and the therapist says: 'Marvellous, well done, and here's your ice-cream'. 'Thank you' – and he takes the ice-cream and of course totally misses his mouth. The laughter in that room – spastics and non-spastics were falling about laughing –but also the feeling of triumph that he'd actually managed to tell the story, because in trying to miss his mouth he might actually have got it there, and ruined everything!

It's the same with any group of people, who take the mickey out of their well-known characteristics, which other people point to disparagingly. The ethnic joke has to be told by someone within that group, or someone who's totally accepted by it. If you're permitted to tell an ethnic joke within the group then you know that you've been accepted.

How would you justify the kind of humour in that story I've just told you, which produced so much chemical reaction? There is immense compassion in that story because it was told in that way.

It's funny how I've heard that story told by some brick-layers in a totally different way.

Yes, because it’s very easy and traditionally accepted to make jokes about people whom you regard as being in an inferior position. You tell jokes about them in order to confirm the fact that you’re not in that position. This is the history of the village idiot, who was often a Downs Syndrome, spastic or spina bifida. Was it told with scorn and ridicule?

Yes.

Oh yes. Humour can be a form of rebellion against authority, some indication that one is more outrageous than other people – a pretence of compassion, but no such thing. There can be a desire to gain notoriety by the ability to shock, so you can then feel superior about the squeamishness of other people who don’t accept your story. This is becoming a very popular form of fringe humour, and goes from satire and good humour into the scurrilous and the obscene quite easily, because there isn’t any compassion in the teller.

What about all the fantasy humour like the Goons? Is that taking itself to an absurd limit?

That’s in a similar sort of realm to science fiction. You take any situation and change one factor and let that one factor bounce off and react through all the other conditions around it, upsetting the rhythm and producing a totally different viewpoint.

So you could say that humour changes.

The mode and the devices change, but I don’t think the patterns change a great deal. Some become more fashionable than others at different times, possibly because of social or political need. The music hall, old-fashioned, bawdy, vulgar humour is related to bringing secrets out into the open; referring to things that everybody does, but

nobody admits to doing. It strips away the veneers of pretentiousness and permits everybody to honestly accept that they are just like the next person when they're all pretending to be different.

Humour has also been used, through the ages, to reveal social attitudes and injustices which would be unacceptable if they were starkly written. Look at the reflective, mirroring humour in Dickens for example. It wasn't even accepted as social commentary until a considerable time afterwards because although everyone knew certain things went on nobody wanted to recognize it.

Sometimes humour points to the extremes that people will go to and the disasters that can then occur. A man lived in a country district and was in the habit of walking home quite late at night. Everybody was being impressed with the need to wear white at night in order to be seen. So this person got himself a completely white outfit – a white suit, a white hat and a white scarf, white gloves and a white stick. Then he went out and got run over by a snow-plough.

And what kind of person would invent this particular kind of joke? Two psychoanalysts talking:

'How are you today?'

'I'm feeling a bit depressed because one of my patients has just died.'

'Oh dear, which one was it?'

'You know the one I've been treating for about two years with a fear of flying?'

'Oh yes. How did he die?'

'He was killed in a plane crash.'

Silence. Who would produce that story?

Possibly someone who is so afraid of flying they won't let any kind of psychiatrist help them at all. A lot of stories are trying to make a very specific point, which is itself a cry for help – some jokes are a cry for help.

Disorientation is also something which is immediately funny: ‘My memory is getting worse, I find I can’t hold one thought from one moment to the next.’

‘Indeed, how long have you had this?’

‘Had what?’

As an aid, a device, try to approach everything you are doing with a general level of gentle, good-humoured amusement. Watch everything as if you’ve got a minute drip of laughing-gas dribbling into the nostril.

To help that feeling use the face on the body. Relax the pelvis and the muscles in the belly to give you the feeling of good humour right in the pit of the stomach. There is a smile in the belly, and you are viewing the world from just below the navel, watching the conditionings as they come up – not looking for something to have a great cackling roar about, but just a gentle amusement with everything that is going on. Add to that the habit of laughing at yourself. “He who has learned to laugh at himself will never cease to be amused”. The jokes tumble one on top of the other all through the day as you’re watching yourself and the antics you get up to.

The answer is never in what you’re supposed to do, or what you’re not supposed to do, the answer is only in what you’re mindful of and how you observe the conditionings rising.

A bloke went to the local village pub and said: ‘Is there a big, black dog with a flash of white around the neck anywhere in the village?’

‘No, there’s no dog like that.’

‘Good God, I think I’ve just run over the vicar.’

Now that’s cruel, I don’t know why you’re laughing. Why should anybody get any delight or fun out of running over a vicar, they’re very hard-working chaps. You ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourselves.

There is an element of presentation.

It’s something to do with it. On the other hand there are certain stories which, in another context, would be a joke, but one has to regard very seriously. If I told that first one about jumping over a cliff in a different way, a more personalized way with a serious face and saying what happened to a friend of mine . . . yes, you’d still have laughed, wouldn’t you?

Chapter 30

Inner Treasure

There's an old Chinese saying – 'Whatever enters you from outside can never be your true treasure.' In other words, the excellence, the essence, is that which one finds within and from which one relates to external things; one cannot seek it in external or materialistic things which one seeks to gain or plunder, although there may be shallow reflections in ideas, concepts and opinions from outside, or in objects, events and people from which one derives identity.

The only true treasure is already within, has always been within, but has not been noticed, recognized, or tapped as a resource. When that concept is first accepted as a reasonable spiritual idea, it can lead, because of the workings of human nature, to the idea that one has to reject things of the outside, which is not so. One doesn't reject things, one releases the attachment to them – the attachment to objects, events and people for identity. 'Give up all you have and follow me' means give up the *attachment* to all you have and then take responsibility for the true and enriched relationship that arises.

This also applies to any ideas of spiritual attainment: there can be no goal 'out there' in terms of time and space, when the goal is already present as the inner treasure. It's the whole meaning of the little boy sitting on the ox looking for the ox. There is nothing one has to try to gain through any form of deprivation, punishment, discipline or hardship. All beings are essentially Buddha – not Buddhas – all beings are Buddha, or Buddhi – enlightened: all one has to do it realize it.

One does not *have* the inner treasure, one *is* the inner treasure. When one detaches oneself from that truth, believing that it has to be sought outwardly in activities and strivings, then one is ignoring that

inner treasure. This is the true meaning of ignorance – not that one is dim or stupid, but that one is ignoring the essential reality that has always been present. It is this ignorance which brings beings to birth in a continuing quest for something they think they must get which they already are.

Hold on to and become familiar with that idea and let it become unthreatening. Just keep repeating it in words; they are better words than others which you repeat to yourself containing less worthy levels of philosophy.

Repeat to yourself in the mirror every evening: 'It is present', 'I am treasure' and gradually come to believe it. Not: 'I must get a silver sword and wrap myself in faith and humility and celibacy and find the treasure.'

'One is.' 'Thou art that.'

Nor must one think of having to go 'in' to look for the treasure because that's another version of going out.

Just breathe and let the body come to ease and rest, and at the point of feeling at ease and at rest in any activity, whether it's pacing or just quietly being with what one is doing – at that moment when it feels good, say: 'This is the treasure'.

That's all. Feel the joy rising. You can say it in one phrase, or you can write a whole book, and provided that book is just a continual outpouring of joy describing each rising moment as it rises and falls away, then that's O.K.

And that's all I have to say about that.

Chapter 31

Thinking Sideways

We are creatures of habit – if we did not have automatic patterns of activity we would have to think out and programme each and every action.

What we have to decide is whether our habits are satisfactory; whether they are giving us contentment and ease, or whether they lead to unpleasantness and suffering.

At one level we have to say that consistency is a matter of habit; if you find that old habits are unwholesome, at any point you may change them, by switching out of automatic into manual and training yourself in a new habit – this will then give you a new kind of consistency.

Obviously during the changeover there are problems and you may look for the support and advice of a teacher. But you can't expect a teacher to press a button and do it for you. The very best any teacher can do is point the direction, give advice from experience, and then leave you to put in the effort. If you're on a tricky bit he can put a rope on you to support you, but under no circumstances may he lift you over even one pebble. That would be to do you a disservice, because it is then something you have not experienced.

One of the great ways that human nature has of suffering is to say: 'I must achieve this at all cost. The system must work and I must make it work.' Sometimes it is very valuable to permit failure – without any judgement at all.

Human nature, because of its averse and acquisitive way, is destined to continual failure until it totally submits itself to confusion – where the clarity is.

Most of you wouldn't know success if you fell over it because you don't know what it is you're wanting to succeed in. You pass liberation and freedom dozens of times each day without recognition, because you're looking for something else – you accuse yourselves of not attaining something which you couldn't describe if you wanted to.

All you can do with that is laugh and try not to take it too seriously. 'Above all, O Monks,' said the Buddha, 'you must cultivate a sense of the ludicrous. This is the path to enlightenment.'

Does the chicken come before the egg or the egg before the chicken? The answer is – they don't.

Watch all the workings of the puny ten percent neural pathways that you call your thinking processes trying to work that out in terms of something which is not confusing! Much better to enter into the confusion.

Nobody knows what I mean when I say you must learn to think sideways, but it produces a sensation which will lead you into a completely new dimension of thought and understanding. Think ahead, think back, think up, think down, and think sideways.

You must encourage Zen madness because it's very comforting and amusing to watch the psychosis of the rational, suffering world thinking itself to be clear and sane and processing itself and other people to make them conform. Just sit with your Zen madness going sideways and up and down in several dimensions with a quiet little smile on your face, knowing how unreal it all is.

Confusion, the great pleasure palace, the amusement arcade – go into it and enjoy yourself.

The way of Zen is the way of non-sense. Not nonsense in the sense of something which is stupid or ridiculous, but which is non-sensing, not of the senses – it is superior to that.

It is the insight that cuts right through the singular and which cannot be described, but which produces changes throughout the whole organism and in our view of things.

I have described it as like flashing a signal to a far star which is the place of singular truth. It has to come back straight to this point at centre which is of the same nature. If we permit the senses to grab at the signal before it reaches centre, and change it into words and ideas and patterns which we then possess (we even sometimes call it a mystical experience which is very satisfying to the senses), we prevent that singular truth coming to the place where it can produce purification and change in the organism.

Insight is the gap through which the present moment shines and makes sense of everything.

I was watching a race meeting on television a few days ago and saw the horses lining up to be put into the starting gates. They have to enter the gap; one had to be led around and around and then brought in, others are backed up and then turned round quickly and slid in, others have to have blindfolds on to usher them in. There are many ways of getting into the gap.

My job is to apply the right kind of subterfuge, coaxing, blackmail, seduction or whatever to get people into the gap; it is my contract.

Zen approaches it in a totally different way and says: ‘Nonsense, of course there is no gap’, and then leads people through where the gap used to be.

The gap – the void.

Void of what? Void of attributes, void of attachments, void of concepts, ideas, irritations, pasts and futures. That is the gap.

Zen presents the mind with the possibility of thinking the unthinkable, and in that, associative thought becomes bewildered and a gap appears.

It’s all the same thing – the gap in the sub-stream – in the great dream of associative thinking – in the delusion of identity. *It is the here and now.* Only in this present moment now can the past and the future be understood.

This is Satipatthāna and Zen. The gap occurs, there is a breach in the wall of the dam, and clear pure water can flow through. Immediately the old beings hurl themselves in to plug the gap – to block the light! All these shadowy beings will be dissolved by the light, and washed away in the flow of the water.

The gap between the rise and the fall – that is the Way – the Way on which there are no walkers.

If you are walking along a path with your back to the light, seeing your shadow and thinking it is you, it can get tricky.

Do not seek the path because you are it.

Chapter 32

Minding Your Own Business

One of the great spiritual truths says that a major source of suffering is not minding your own business – or worse, not even knowing what your business is.

Not Minding-One's-Own-Business, from the grossest and most obvious form to the incredibly fine nuances of mental activity is, quite simply, *interference*. It is impossible to dissociate from 'Forward Circling' and 'In-breath' and 'Held-breath' activity. It is the essence of 'Doing' and 'Where-we are-going-to'. It is profoundly related to the father and the mother of personal suffering – 'Getting-what-we-don't-want' and 'Wanting-what-we-don't-get'. It is not of the moment – it is the great distraction from Reality and from Ease and Peace.

Let us look at these things in more detail. We are born into a dualistic world comprised of what I am going to call complementary opposites. They are not opposed, in competition, or at loggerheads with each other – it only appears that way sometimes. In fact the way through to the utter simplicity that everyone is seeking – the peace, the ease and the calm which indeed passes all intellectual understanding – is when we are able to take those two complementary opposites, put them together, and see no difference between them. Left and right, in and out, expansion and contraction, good and bad are all things which we use to describe and conceptualize our world and reach judgements and have ideas about. Through meditation and attention we can realize that there is indeed no difference – it's just a matter of preference, of temperament and of conditioning to see these dualities as competitive rather than complementary.

Within the movement of something we call life, the way we conduct our activities in the world also falls into two distinct

categories. One is that an action is performed from where we are coming from, and the other is related to where we are going to. One is the being, and the other is the doing.

When there is a state of being, and the action takes place from the single point, that single point expands and expresses itself in the world. When we have a goal, a doing, an achieving, we are immediately in the category of getting what we don't want and wanting what we don't get, in where we are going to and in either trying to repeat or avoid something that we have experienced in the past. We can, in terms of technique, link these with forward and backward circling and in and out breaths.

So we have the noble art of minding our own business, with its complementary opposite, interfering. Since whichever birthday it was, when I bought a satellite, we have been avidly watching 'Star Trek'. One of the principle tenets of the Star Fleet philosophy in contacting other cultures is what is called the Prime Directive. This says very simply that you must not interfere in someone else's culture – you mustn't try to save anybody, you mustn't try to boost them along a little bit – because it is not their time.

One has to learn that there is a time for things to happen. With that at its heart, the Prime Directive is really no more than a way of saying *Mind your own business*, whether in a galactic, universal or just a local sense within the household.

I wrote in a recent Newsletter: 'First of all find out what *is* your own business and then mind it.' To do that the vital requirements are Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension as to Purpose and Suitability – to know what constitutes a contract or permission to enter – before injecting advice or comment regarding someone else's actions or way of life. It is always easier to mind someone else's business than one's own – it's less painful!

Is your business something out there that because of your nature, upbringing or experience you feel you have to do something about in order to justify yourself?

Or is the prime factor in minding your own business, that of minding about *you* and *taking care of yourself*?

Because to a person here, in varying degrees, you do not take care of yourselves. Otherwise you would all be as fit, mentally and physically, as you would like to be and as you could be if you guarded your philosophy – really understood what you believed in, and actually did it, as a regular pattern of behaviour.

Let us start at an organic level. When the organism is at ease and centred, there is balance. If one aspect of that organic being, that body corporate, does not mind its own business and for example, the right shoulder becomes hyperactive, linking up with thoughts, ideas and activities of 'doing' and where it's going to, then the right shoulder becomes the thing that is not minding its own business, and within that context it interferes and you are no longer centred. Centre has been usurped by this right shoulder, thinking activity which tries to make or prevent things happening. That is the level of not minding your own business, or interfering, in your life stream at the organic level.

Then think of the amount of not minding your own business that takes place at the level of verbal thinking in the dualistic sense.

And what is not minding your own business in a personal context? It is not being in the moment – summoning past conditionings and old beings who take over and play out something which is completely out of date, knocking you off centre.

Your own business is *Here and Now in the moment*. Anything else is an interference, from the past or the future.

Expectations, needs, wanting to hold on to something which has already gone, or wanting to grasp at something which hasn't yet

arrived. Not being connected with the co-operation and loving fusion of those complementary opposites which brings the body and mind to peace. At any level – from intimate personal relationships to the international, we are looking for a minding of one's own business and a non-interference beyond the bounds of who and what we are in any given moment.

What I am inviting you to do is to look at these simple equations – to see the habit in any actions you perform, of having expectations – of putting yourself into the future so that you have the security of being there and then catching up with it – of not being content with being Here and Now in the moment, but having to always flit back to something or forward to something in order to gain your identity.

We know that if we invest the security of our identity in any object, event or person, then we become a victim to that object, event or person. See that in terms of not minding our own business, of trampling over and feeding off someone else's space, of offering or indeed 'force-feeding' others with views and opinions of what they should do or think, and of not permitting, in terms of simple domestic organization, something to fail, so we learn from it, *but always trying to make things good or perfect to make us feel more comfortable.*

Whether or not you voice or perform an action of not minding your own business the damage and danger to you, the intruder, is the same – the mind is distracted from the moment of peace and ease, and like the disruptive power of the computer virus which scrambles and disables programmes, your mind, body and immune system are disabled. The weight and wastage of energy and the tension activated by physical, verbal and mental intrusion into objects, events and people is truly a killer.

It is comparatively easy to see these patterns working out in the so-called 'big things', but the most important thing is to see them working out in the small, subtle and everyday things, because that is

where the habit is set. That is where we may begin to realize the extent of our reliance on gaining and holding on to an identity, related not to what is present in any ever-changing moment, but fashioned from a level of discontent, expectation, need and manipulation. A striving for things which either will never appear, or which are long gone and are equally unlikely to appear again.

If we are always bound up in where we are going to, we may never appreciate and feel at ease with where we are coming from – in fact we won't even know what that place is. If we are continually conducting our life and judging our level of ease and happiness on the basis of getting what we don't want or wanting what we don't get, then we will never be contented, and we will regard that state of discontent as the norm. We will go through life not being able to relate to the happiness that lies in what is present in any moment. Within that arise opinions, ideas and attitudes – about ourselves and who we are – about other people and who they are – about how other people see us and how we see them. We react with disappointment, anger and rejection, (which is another aspect of getting what we don't want and wanting what we don't get) to other people's behaviour which we roundly condemn, failing to notice that what we are condemning in someone else is a reflection of our own behaviour that we are not able to come to terms with.

Don't get paranoid about all this and have views that some things are good and some things are bad, and that there is either failure or success or shame or guilt. We are talking about the patterns of human nature – which is a disease we all happen to have – and so we don't have to bother wondering if someone else has got a worse case of the disease than we have, because we've all got it exactly the same. Some people know about it a little bit more than others, that's all.

Just let go of the rock you keep throwing up the hillside and which keeps falling back on you. *You only have to let it go.*

The way to stop a bouncing ball is not by hitting it, not by grabbing it or pushing it away but by just removing the hand and seeing the ball roll away, and with it the energy you have been expending. And with that act of letting go, there is an act of forgiveness, both of yourself and of any imagined action by any other being.

There has to be trust, here, in the belly, that everything is all right. And if that trust is there everything *will* be all right, and you will expand into situations and they will be right for you in a quite superior way to any decision you might make on the basis of where you want to go and what you want to happen to you.

Chapter 33

The Ancient City

At the centre of the universe of each being there is a bright needle point which is the place of ultimate reality.

Around that there are crusts and layers of past beings from many lives and modes of expression, back to the beginning of this deluded existence called Man.

In each moment of consciousness, the bright point flashes from centre, but it is subdued and blocked by those many beings lingering from the past and believing themselves to be real.

Freedom, peace, progression and development are only possible from this place of stillness – the eye of the storm – and are inhibited by ignorance, greed, hate, ill will and fear. With regular attention, love and belief, those crusts of ritual and taboos will dissolve to being peace and purification.

The place is active and dynamic, full of good humour and enriched emotions. Nothing passive, nothing sickly or smug, nothing holier than thou, just natural and free and joyful – humorous and uninhibited.

I invite you to feel for this inner place, this Inner Teacher, so that we can expand it through the crusts. I invite you to visualize with me a place that I shall describe. It is an Ancient City that has existed for so long that is it not possible to measure the years of its existence. It has no name. It is called only ‘The Ancient City’ and travellers continually seek it and the ancient way that leads to it.

They come by many routes; some from the South through the element of earth, by way of mountain ranges and deserts, harsh terrain, with forests full of wild animals; some from the North through the element of fire, by way of a great, spurting volcano, the land

molten and barren; some from the West through the element of air, by way of a great cliff and then emptiness where only winds and gales and hurricanes rage and nothing can be seen except the movement and the swirling of these winds; and some from the East through the element of water, by way of a vast rolling ocean and near the shore, crags, rocks, whirlpools and breakers.

As each traveller breaks through their natural element, their natural expression of who they are, they reach the calmer places where a warming sun encourages new growth in the rich volcanic soil, where the mountains give way to a smooth plain of green grass and orchards, where the winds die down and become gentle breezes and where the ocean settles into a calm and peaceful lagoon. They are touched by the other elements and are integrated and become residents of that inner city.

At the centre in a place continually filled with light there is a Teacher to whom all travellers go: they sit with him and as they look into his face, they see only their own face, fresh and happy – the face of who they are to be in the future. Having visited this Inner Teacher they become citizens of the Ancient City, and each day they meet and sit with other citizens and give thanks that they are there, and think of the beings who have not yet arrived, and send love to those who are on their way in this meditation saying:

Peace to all beings
May all beings be well and happy
And free from fear

Peace to all beings
Whether near or far
Whether known or unknown
Visible or invisible

Real or imaginary
Born or yet to be born

May all beings be well and happy
And free from fear

Peace to all beings
Within and beyond the imagination
In the world of ideas
In the world memories
And in the world of dreams

May all beings be well and happy
And free from fear

Peace in all elements
Of earth and air and fire and water
Fulfilled in space
Peace

Peace in all universes
From the smallest cells in the body
To the greatest galaxies in space

Peace
And light rising

Peace and love and comfort and ease
To all in need

May they be well and happy

And free from fear

The Way of Satipatthãna to be inserted

The Ancient Blessing on Wayfarers

That on your way
your skin may know the
touch of the thread of a
thousand silkworms.
That in your nostrils there
will rise the perfume of
jasmine, and in your mouth
the taste of honey.
That your ears may hear
the rush of the eagle’s wing,
and the rustling of bamboo.
That your eyes may behold
the elephant walking through
the rainbow
and that in your
consciousness there may
rise the bright diamond point
of the Dhamma-Kaya
of clear pure mind.

Biographical note

John Garrie was born and educated in Manchester, and before World War II was an athlete at county level. He flew with Bomber Command during the War, was invalided out of flying duties and finished the War in an entertainment unit.

His psychic experiences during and after flying led directly to a personal search for acceptable reasons and philosophical explanations. This first took the form of psychic development, mediumship and healing.

Parallel with this search for philosophical identity, he was also searching for a suitable outlet for his entertainment talents which led him into revue and ice-shows as a singer and impressionist, to circus and holiday camps as a clown, and later as an actor into the West End, films and television.

At twenty-eight he met a Burmese Buddhist monk, Sayadaw U Thittila, who gave a completely new direction to his life investigation, and set him on a course of twenty years' meditative and philosophical training in the Theravadin tradition of Satipatthāna.

He was co-founder of two Buddhist organisations in the North of England, and lectured extensively throughout the country. In the 1960s he was closely involved with organizations in support of the Buddhist Sangha in this country, from Thailand, Ceylon and Tibet. In the early sixties, as a member of the English Sangha Trust, he was appointed Director of the International Meditation Centre at Biddulph in Staffordshire, to which meditation teachers, who were later to found centres of their own, also came to teach.

He has been teaching for twenty-five years, in the Satipatthāna/Zen tradition, and has developed his own system of

breathing, relaxation and postural adjustment as a basis for meditative training.

In 1973 he founded the Sati Society, and membership now extends to affiliated groups in Europe and attracts students from a variety of religious backgrounds and from many parts of the world.